

LB2809 new York State Association of
N7A2 district superintendents.

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL MEETING

OF THE

New York State Association

OF

SCHOOL COMMISSIONERS

AND

CITY SUPERINTENDENTS,

HELD AT

UTICA, FEB. 19, 20, 21, 1878.

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Twenty-third Annual Meeting of the New York State Association of School Commissioners and City Superintendents, held at Utica, Feb. 19, 20, 21, 1878.

FIRST DAY.—TUESDAY, FEB. 19.

EVENING SESSION.

The Association met at the Free Academy, and was called to order by the President, Supt. A. McMillan, at 8 o'clock. After prayer by Rev. Dr. Fowler, the address of welcome was delivered by J. C. P. Kincaid Esq., President of the Utica Board of Education.

Mr. President McMillan and Gentlemen:

You have gathered together from various localities in our State, to hold this, your annual Association of State School Commissioners and City Superintendents. As such School Commissioners and Superintendents, on behalf of the city of Utica, as represented by its Board of Education, I take great pleasure in extending to you all a cordial welcome to our city.

We recognize you all as being enlisted in the great cause of popular and free education—a cause that is of as vital importance to our State and national weal as any one to which our attention can be directed; one that, day by day, is being drawn closer and closer to the public mind, and to the support of which, sooner or later, every citizen must be pledged who has the public good at heart. And, gentlemen, I know whereof I speak when I say that you have come to a city the larger portion of whose citizens are in strong sympathy with the object of your meeting.

Utica is proud of her public schools, and her citizens welcome among them any and all who are striving to make the public schools still better. A perfect school system can only be obtained by long years of experience. Thus it is with yourselves; your observations in the past, with a knowledge of its imperfections and errors, enable you to perform all the more successfully your duties in the future. The object of these gatherings, if I understand aright, is for mutual improvement in the science of educating, as well as for the discussion of various subjects having in view the elevation and improvement of our common school system. Minds and methods may differ, but it is by comparison between different methods, having the same ultimate object in view, that we arrive at the wisest conclusions.

Mr. President and gentlemen, with your minds fresh with the experiences of the past year, with a knowledge of its successes—possibly its disappointments—before you, you have come to again counsel and advise together. It is our earnest wish that you find this association no less profitable than those which have preceded it, and that when you have returned to your several posts of duty you will have nothing but pleasant recollections of the Association of School Commissioners and Superintendents at Utica.

Hon. Neil Gilmour, of Albany, then responded, addressing the citizens of Utica and Board of Education as follows:

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Board of Education of the City of Utica:

On behalf of the Association of School Commissioners and Superintendents of the State of New York, for your hearty welcome to this city I return you,

sir, my sincere thanks. We are as glad to come to your city as you indicate to us by your heartfelt remarks, that you are to have us. We are indeed glad to be in this, one of the county seats of Oneida county, and from the position it has taken in regard to its public system of education, it is well entitled to be called the "city of learning." We are glad to be in this city which, in less than a quarter of a century has almost doubled its population. We are glad to be in Utica—the Utica of to-day—greater by far than the Fort Schuyler of a century ago. We are glad, sir, to be in this city, which has given to the councils of the State and of the nation so many men who have distinguished themselves in the different walks of life.

Now if we should ask, what is the cause of the prosperity of the city of Utica, one would tell me that this canal had something to do with it; that the railroads which come through here have been a source of progress to the city. True, I doubt not that these have contributed, in a measure, to its growth; but, as I say here, and I say it without fear of successful contradiction, that the progress of the city of Utica is due, in greater cause, to its system of education, and goes to show how the education of the young, both in the lower and higher branches, is the successful system. [Applause.]

The poet has told us that

"Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

Well, sir, it has been too true, but to-day fewer men mourn than did years ago, and we feel that fewer will mourn as the condition of the race is ameliorated. And, sir, it is through the teachers disseminating education that we hope the race will be elevated.

To-day we know our system of education has received a few blows, and we propose to parry them. Sir, as was said of the American flag, so shall we say of the system of public education as to-day it exists in the State of New York, "Not a star shall be obliterated, not a stripe erased," but instead of allowing any part of this splendid system to be injured we, on our part, will do all we can to make it still better. [Applause.]

Again, sir, I thank you.

After music by Misses Charles and Taylor, President McMillan delivered the following address:

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the Association:

Conventions, as designated by their varied titles of council, synod, convocation, diet, parliament, congress, convention—the last two peculiar to a republican form of government—can be traced through a long line of uninterrupted descent to remote ages, which even antedate the Christian era.

At different periods and under different names, such assemblages have controlled the destinies of the race. Through them nations, empires and republics have alike received the fiat of existence, or the inevitable doom of decay and death. They have founded governments, framed laws, determined and prescribed matters of faith and discipline affecting vital interests of great masses of people; or in turn they have changed dynasties, usurped thrones, overturned governments, subverted law, order and all moral and religious principles upon which the well-being of society depends.

History is replete with records of religious, political and social events, growing out of the organization of these institutions. Some called for hasty relief in a political crisis, others running year after year and constituting a national institution of power.

Such was the Amphictyon Council, that great Grecian convention wherein the destinies of nations and the fate of kings were decided, and the admission into which was the end of all the early political dreams of Philip of Macedon.

Or turn if you will to that convention of anarchists, who under the specious but delusive idea and watchword of liberty and equality held absolute supremacy over suffering Paris during three years of the French revolution. Under that reign of terror how ruthlessly was liberty sacrificed on the block of despotism; religious toleration on the altar of bigotry and fanaticism; and constitutional law and civil rights in the person of the unhappy Louis XVI.!

Who shall compute the measureless influence radiating from that diet in the

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old city of Worms, where Luther thundered forth the foundation tenets of the reformation? And so we might speak of the dread Council of Ten, watching in secret the lives and deeds of Venice; the council of the ancients, the council of five hundred; numberless councils of military and political leaders of later times, in which the issue of battles and the fate of kingdoms have been decided, until we come down to the present century—this era of leagues, unions, associations, and conventions, having for their specific purpose, first, the formation of public opinion; second, to give the sentiment thus formed scope and direction; and third, to wield the power thus generated in furtherance of the interests involved, whatever its character, be it social, political or religious.

It is, therefore, in obedience to this almost universal law of social ethics, that we, as a body, representing the great mass of educators of the Empire State, are at this hour convened to examine, if not clearly to solve, some of the abstruse educational problems of the day, and which directly affect the welfare of more than a million of children and youth included in our school population. This work devolves upon us grave responsibilities, and its prosecution, I trust, will engage only intelligence, candor and catholicity of spirit, strengthened by a firm, unbiassed purpose to seek after truth, and which, if happily found, shall be made subservient in advancing the cause we represent.

In accordance with the usual custom, I will briefly present a few leading subjects; some old, some new, which at this time engage public discussion and will claim your careful consideration.

TOWNSHIP SYSTEM.

First on the list may be ranked the so-called township system, which means the substitution of the township for the school district system, now in operation. According to the last annual report of the Hon. Neil Gilmour, Superintendent of Public Instruction in this State, we have 11,287 school districts, and 11,833 school houses scattered over an area of 47,000 square miles, with an aggregate of 1,023,715 pupils and 30,161 teachers. This computation does not include academies and normal schools. These schools are officered by only 21 city superintendents and 112 school commissioners. Upon these 112 commissioners devolves the direction of the common schools in the rural districts, included in the 47,000 square miles of territory over which they are distributed. It is perfectly obvious that no commissioner, however energetic and earnest he may be, can bestow upon the schools in his jurisdiction that personal care and oversight requisite to their success.

At the annual meeting of this Association held in Syracuse in the year 1870, I had the honor to present a report on this subject, and submitted in the main the following plan for the township system:

First. Let each school district in the State elect one trustee, in the same manner as trustees are now elected.

Second. Let the several trustees of each town constitute a town board of education—said board to have the general supervision of the schools in their respective towns, and in addition to their other duties to have the appointment of a town superintendent; said superintendent to have the special charge of all the public schools and school property in his town. He shall, at the close of the school year, make an annual report to the school commissioner of his district; he shall visit the schools of his town as often as his other duties will permit, and give such aid to the teachers in matters pertaining to the organization and instruction in their schools as may be necessary.

The district commissioners are to perform in the main the same duties as are now required of them.

We shall by this system have one State superintendent's district, extending over the entire State—this territory subdivided into 113 school commissioner's districts; these districts again subdivided into town superintendent's districts, and these town districts again divided into school districts—thus making a complete grade of supervision, extending from the trustee of a school district to the State Superintendent at Albany.

For a more thorough course of instruction I would suggest the formation of the present district schools, located in different parts of the towns, into primary and intermediate departments, in which pupils can receive a rudimentary education. At some central locality in each town there should be established,

when it can consistently be done, a grammar or high school, to which pupils may be admitted from the different intermediate schools of the town, after passing a satisfactory examination in the branches taught in those schools; in this school pupils to pursue a full course of study in the common and higher English branches.

This plan can easily be put into operation, and it involves no radical change in the manner of electing the members of the town board. It also insures a representative in said board from each section of the town.

It is a matter of deep solicitude that prompt action should be taken for remedying the glaring evil of insufficient local supervision as it exists to-day.

SCHOOL AGE.

The second topic to which I invite your attention is the proposed change in regard to the school age, which, as you are aware, is fixed in this State at from five to twenty-one years. From the fact that by special act most cities prohibit the attendance at school of children under six, while by far the greater number of our young men and women leave school before twenty-one, it happens that a large proportion of the school population is not in attendance. And hence our State suffers in educational comparisons with other States and foreign countries. General Eaton makes his table of comparative statistics for the United States on a basis of six to sixteen as the school age.

Moreover, it has been demonstrated by actual experiment that children who do not enter school under the age of six make better scholars and graduate earlier than those whose education commences at five. Neither the physical nor mental nature is sufficiently matured before six to endure, much less profit, by the rigid discipline and close application required in a well-governed school. All judicious parents must realize that the first few years of a child's life belong to the building up of his physical nature, subsequently to develop the mind. May a dispirited, unsuccessful youth owes his blighted life to the mistaken zeal of thoughtless parents, who have urged him into brilliant, but in the end, fatal over-exertion at school. For humanitarian, as well as statistical purposes, then, six and sixteen should be the legal limits of school age. For laws should correspond with existing facts, and be made applicable to the present day and century.

TEACHERS' QUALIFICATIONS.

In presenting the subject of teachers' qualifications I will trespass on your patience long enough to read an abstract from the resolutions adopted at a meeting of the leading citizens of New York city, held at Cooper Institute last month to protest against the reduction of teachers' salaries. The resolutions quoted apply with equal force to the entire State. I leave the plan for securing such teachers to the Committee on Teachers' Examinations:

Resolved, That the system of public instruction in the city of New York is and ought to be second to no other on this continent or in the world.

Resolved, That the people of this metropolis look with interest and pride, not alone at the intellectual training of their children, but also to those equalizing and harmonizing influences which prevail in our public schools, where the rich and poor meet together on one common level and are untrammelled either by the conceits of wealth or discouragements of poverty.

Resolved, That we recognize in the position of teacher the necessity of those high moral and intellectual qualifications which are attained only by long years of patient toil, study and culture. An educator cannot be one who is himself uneducated. A pattern for our children cannot be one who is void of those high and noble principles which shed their benign influence throughout the school and leave their enduring impress on society, its laws and institutions."

William Cullen Bryant, in a communication to this meeting, says:

"We want the ablest and best men and women in the community to engage in the vocation of teaching. To reduce their compensation will cause many of this class to resort to other occupations, and will prevent many of them from devoting themselves to the instruction of our youth. In this way it will cause the degeneracy of our school system and have a most injurious effect on the generation which is to take our place on the earth.

Again, the poorer class—the class for which our public school system is mainly

adapted—have a deep interest in this matter. It is important for them that the teachers should be of that class who are the most skilful in communicating knowledge and training to the pupils, as well as habits of order and diligence."

One of our wise legislators has introduced a bill which virtually places the examination of public school teachers in the hands of the Regents of the University, a majority of whom, I presume, have not entered a common school building during the present century. I presume this proposition will never become a law; the Legislature doubtless will prefer to leave the matter where it now is—in the hands of competent officers directly responsible to the people. It is for these officers to decide upon the best means for securing such teachers as the people have a right to demand should be the educators of their children.

A STATED SCHOOL TAX.

I desire again to call the attention of the association to the fact that an attempt is being made to return to the old plan of substituting a stated fixed sum for school purposes, for the present manner of raising $1\frac{1}{2}$ mills per dollar on the assessed valuation of the State.

It seems to me the following statement, made by Superintendent Gilmour, should settle this question without argument, as the figures so plainly show that the school attendance in the State increases by a far greater ratio than the increased amount raised for school purposes. In Superintendent Gilmour's last report I find the following table: The average number of pupils attending the public schools each day of the entire school year in 1877 was 17,927 more than in 1876; 27,702 more than in 1875; 44,313 more than in 1874; 60,068 more than in 1873; 64,687 more than in 1872, and 65,889 more than in 1871; showing that as the State increases in wealth there must necessarily be an increase in attendance upon the schools, for the prosperity and happiness of any people must always depend upon their intelligence.

TEXT BOOKS.

Next to the frequent changing of teachers, there is no evil in a school more pernicious than a constant rotation of text books. The former evil, however, is, in the main, the cause of the latter. Each teacher having his peculiar views in regard to text books, and desiring to use those which seem to him the best and with which perhaps he is most familiar, he calls to his aid the persuasive powers of the irrepressible book agent, and often succeeds in overcoming the scruples of school officers. However, the people, who are ever on the alert for their pecuniary interests, are, through their legal representatives, correcting this evil.

The law passed by our Legislature last winter was doubtless intended as a sovereign remedy for this evil, but, being unfortunate in some of its details, became, consequently, the cause of much discussion and confusion. To be productive of good the law should be amended, and perhaps the best amendment would be to abolish it, thus placing the subject again where it really belongs, in the hands of the legal school officers. A text book should never be adopted until it has been thoroughly examined by a judicious committee, and it is presumed the people will elect only competent persons to take charge of their school affairs.

Mr. Lippitt has introduced in the State Senate a bill by which the president of Columbia College, the president of Union College, the president of Hamilton College, the president of Rochester University, the president of Cornell University, the president of St. John's College, the president of Syracuse University, the President of Vassar College, and the president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute are constituted a permanent commission for the purpose of deciding on a standard of uniform text books to be used throughout New York State. Within one month after the passage of the act they shall meet, at the call of the Secretary of State, and proceed to procure for examination copies of the various text books in different branches of education. Twenty-five thousand dollars are subscribed for carrying out the provisions of the bill, and each member of the commission is to be paid \$10 a day while the session is being held.

I can hardly believe this bill will be seriously considered by the Senate. I trust that, should it become a law, it will be amended so as to make the prin-

cipals of the primary departments in the public schools a committee to select the text books to be used in the several colleges in the State; not, of course, forgetting the clause allowing each member of such committee \$10 per day for their services.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

Although the State makes provision for educating every child within her borders, yet there remains no inconsiderable number of children in every city and large town whom from a variety of causes, this beneficent plan fails to reach. As the causes for this deficiency do not properly fall within the province of our investigation, we will simply look at the results; which in general terms may be stated, as lawlessness, idleness, ignorance, immorality and vice of almost every species, alike ruinous to the youthful victim and contaminating to the surrounding moral atmosphere.

As these vitiating qualities increase in rapid ratio, who shall be able to estimate their effects, or the burden thus imposed on society when this mass of youthful depravity becomes merged, as it inevitably must, a constituent element in the body politic.

The answer comes with appalling force from the statistics of our prisons and record of pauperism. It is an established fact that of 9,855 paupers of the State, only 29 61-100 per cent. ever crossed the thresholds of the public schools; and only 24 19-100 per cent. could read or write, leaving 47 per cent. in what may be called total ignorance.

With the purpose in view of providing a remedy for this evil, deep-rooted as the foundations of society itself, an act providing for compulsory education was passed in 1874, which, it was hoped, would meet most of the requisite conditions for benefiting this class of children, and in a good degree prove the future public safeguard against pauperism and crime. Owing, however, to radical defects, this law is practically inoperative.

As a substitute for this act, I would suggest a truant law sufficiently comprehensive to include every vagrant child within the limits of school age, from habitually running at large, and placing such in school, the regularly organized schools to be preferred, where they will be brought under such influences and restrictions as will bear directly on their intellectual training and moral reformation. This course is both legal and just, and offers the only hope of arresting the devastating tide of crime and pauperism now sweeping over the State, undermining its foundations, and which neither legislation nor philanthropy has as yet devised effective measures to resist.

In this city the most difficult problem for the school authorities to solve is how to provide accommodations for all the pupils who apply, and judging from reports from other sections, the same desire for education prevails universally.

Therefore, a comprehensive truant law will accomplish all the good results arrived at by the compulsory education act, while avoiding its objectionable features.

As far as my observation extends, parents, so far from being unwilling to allow their children to attend school, evince the most eager desire to have them profit by the educational facilities offered.

OPPONENTS OF OUR SCHOOLS.

We are constantly hearing from the opponents of our schools of the enormous sums of money expended for education; while they are very careful to keep from view statistics in regard to the multitude of children the State is called upon to educate. Let us for a few moments look at the facts. According to Superintendent Gilmour's last annual report the school population of the State is 1,586,234. The sum raised by tax for school purposes is \$2,938,207.86; being \$1.87 per pupil for a year's tuition; or to make the question still plainer as compared with the price paid for tuition in private schools, where payments are made by the term or quarter, the State of New York pays by tax 62 cents per term for the education of her children. Let us add to this \$170,000 received from the common school fund, and \$165,000 from the United States deposit fund; and we raise the amount paid by the State from all sources for education in the several departments of our school system to the enormous sum of 69 cents per quarter; verily it does seem to me that this amount is small enough to satisfy even Governor Robinson.

But say these carpers, the amount received from the State Department is less than one-quarter of the amount expended for education in our public schools. Very true, but this is not a question to be settled by the State Legislature. It is admitted, *una voce*, that the State as a State has a right to educate her children. A writer in the New York *Herald* but formulates a truth when he says:

"Children are the property of the State; they are the future State itself. If they grow up ignorant and vicious the State takes cognizance of the fact and deprives them of liberty or life. The power to punish the vices born of ignorance implies not only the power to prevent these vices by education, but also to make that education the very best. The State has the right to train the talents of her children to her use, just as she has the right to train sailors and soldiers; and the free State or people which neglects to increase the value of the children by failing to offer to all that can accept it, not only the most liberal education, but also an education absolutely free from the faintest trace of a charitable or eleemosynary character, fails to do its duty and will inevitably be compelled to face the results of that failure."

Now the only question for discussion is in regard to the amount of help the State shall give towards sustaining schools for 30 weeks a year in the several districts. But the State has no right whatever to say to a district or town, you may add just so much to this fund and no more. I claim that the people should be permitted to decide how much education they will give their children. If perchance there be a community where the majority desire to deal out mental starvation at the rate of sixty-nine cents per quarter, no one can doubt their legal right to do so, however much he may question their patriotism or humanity. If, on the contrary, certain citizens possessing an appreciation of the value of knowledge, have decided to found and maintain educational institutions on a more generous basis, bestowing upon their youth, rich and poor alike, the inestimable blessing of thorough instruction in the various departments of industry, whether agricultural, mechanical or professional, what will or hand dare raise itself in opposition to so wise and noble a course?

It would be well for the State Legislature to pass a general law, requiring the school officers to submit the question whether a district or town will sustain an academic department in connection with the public schools in their respective districts, whenever one-fifth of the legal voters in the district or town petition them to do so. In this way the question would be settled by the only tribunal that has a right to decide such a question in this country—the people themselves.

HIGHER EDUCATION.

Higher education, popularly so-called in our public schools, is not, as some would imply, a new theory, but simply a centralization of an old one. For more than a quarter of a century even in the rural districts of the State the higher branches were included in a curriculum of studies running up the educational scale from a, b, c. to algebra, philosophy, astronomy and, in fact, all the higher English branches now taught in the higher departments of our union schools.

How imperfectly these studies were formerly taught I leave those to imagine who have seen one teacher with from fifty to seventy-five scholars, trying to instruct a school in the primary, intermediate and higher grades at the same time. Union or graded schools of to-day are doing the same work in a systematized manner. The school or series of schools are now organized into primary, intermediate and grammar or higher departments. The higher branches are placed in charge of teachers who can not only give their entire time to the class during the recitation, but are also especially prepared for their work. True, the nominal expense incurred by this measure is somewhat greater than under the former loose, desultory plan. But what are its compensating results? The answer comes in unmistakable language; in the universal growth and prosperity of our entire country. What but the higher education of the people has deservedly placed America in the front rank of the nations of the world? What but a diffusion of knowledge among the people has created the industries, made the inventions of steam, the telegraph, and all the appliances of agriculture and manufacture, things of actual consummation? What but the refinement of thought growing out of this higher education has given birth to

all, developed science, opened up new and ever-increasing channels of trade and commerce with foreign nations, freighting every outgoing ship with products of American industry? On looking from an intellectual standpoint what but a demand for a higher education builds and liberally endowes our colleges, upholds our academies, dots everywhere the landscape with school houses, or has called into existence those mighty engines of almost actual life, scattering broadcast throughout the land millions of pages of printed matter for the edification of the people. Or if we turn to a humanitarian standpoint, what but piety, intelligence and virtue, the natural outgrow of a higher education among the people, has founded asylums, hospitals, and homes for the care and maintenance of every class of unfortunates otherwise unprovided for and otherwise neglected. In view of these facts shall higher education be set aside, and as a consequence we as a people relapse into a high-developed condition of society? I think not. I believe the age demands and that the better judgment of the people will not only uphold our present system of union schools, including the higher department, but will make ample provision for their continuance.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, permit me to say that I have unbounded confidence in the future of our public schools. True, their efficiency may be seriously impaired by their mercenary foes; their energies wasted; their resources crippled; their radiant light now beaming over every hamlet and town dimmed and obscured by thick gathering clouds, foreboding disaster, yet shall not their foundations be shaken until the final overthrow of the temple of freedom, wherein we worship.

Our common schools must forever stand as the natural conservators of our civil and religious liberties. To them we must look for dissemination of learning, virtue and patriotism among the people, for only they offer a sure defence against the incursions of ignorance and crime, the usurpations of bigotry and the subversive effects of despotic power. This is accomplished by placing within the reach of every child in the community such an education as shall prepare him for an intelligent exercise of all the prerogatives of American citizenship. Nor is this all. From our public schools emerge in unbroken rank those who shall develop the material resources of the country; or project its enterprises of commerce and trade; carry forward its industries; make its laws; for from these nurseries of learning go forth the inventor, the artisan, the agriculturist, the professional men, who are to shape the destinies of future generations.

If such is the missions of our public schools let them be upheld and maintained by the will and power of a sovereign people. Let no considerations, of selfish interests, no partisan aims, or yet worse, the more specious, but equally fatal pretext of political policy, destroy or abridge their beneficent plan, or swerve from the rule of justice their noble endeavor.

After a song by Miss Mulholland, John Kennedy, of New York, delivered an address on the American school system. The paper was mainly in answer to one read by Hon. Charles E. Fitch, of Rochester, (the editor of the *Rochester Democrat*), one of the Regents of the University, before the State Teachers' Association at Watkins.

The session closed with a vocal quartette.

SECOND DAY.—WEDNESDAY, FEB. 20.

MORNING SESSION.

Many of the members having attended the opening exercises at the advanced school, the Association convened at the United States Court Room, City Hall, and was called to order at 9:45.

After the minutes of the meeting of last year were read and approved, and a recess of ten minutes had been taken for registry and payment of dues, Com. C. V. Hooper, presented the report of the Committee upon the Township System, strongly advocating the same.

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Convention :

The subject assigned your Committee is one of vital importance, and has elicited much discussion from educational men for the past few years. The welfare of the commonwealth is based upon the moral and intellectual culture of her citizens. If this be true, popular education should be vital to all, and the advancement of that education a duty paramount to every other. While our State holds out citizenship to every man, it ought also to furnish a liberal education to every child. If the expenses for popular education are paid by taxing the citizens, every citizen is entitled to all the benefits of the public school system. The public schools should not only be open to all, but parents should be compelled to provide for their children a certain amount of instruction. No thinking man, who has followed the progress of our public schools for the last few years, can but have noticed the praiseworthy efforts of our Superintendents and Commissioners in improving them; but their efforts have, to a great extent, been fruitless. One of the great obstacles in the way of educational progress in the rural districts is the present trustee system. Whatever may have been the value of the system in its early days, when there was more of mutual dependence and equality than at present, it certainly has outlived its day of usefulness and should give way to some more intelligent and effective system of supervision. The educational progress of the times demands a change.

THE BETTER CLASS

of common schools of to-day are as much in advance of those of twenty-five or thirty years ago as are the implements of agriculture, the labor-saving machines, the methods of travel and of commerce; and yet men who learned something of the three R's in the schools of those days, whose ideas of education have not advanced with the times, whose ideal common school is the one which they attended, whose only idea of school government is suggested by the remembrance of the free use of the whip and ferule, whose mathematical attainments ended with the "Rule of Three," whose knowledge of language was wholly obtained from the "Elementary Spelling Book," whose proficiency in book-keeping enables them to keep accounts on the door-frame or upon the lid of the grain-bin, whose knowledge of geography does not *convince* them that the earth is round, are considered fully competent to fill the office of school trustee, one of the most important offices in the present system of school supervision; indeed, few public officers have it in their power to do more for the benefit or injury of society than school trustees. It is true that there are some persons elected to the office of trustee who are fully up with the times, and exert their utmost influence to improve the schools under their charge; but my experience, both as teacher and as Commissioner, prompts me to believe that the greater part of the school trustees are not selected on account of their fitness for the position, or the amount of interest they take in the educational welfare of the children of their districts. In very many districts the man who will agree to

RUN THE SCHOOL THE CHEAPEST

is most sought after, and if he succeed in running it with the public money alone he is pretty sure of re-election. There are districts in the State the Trustees of which have not levied a tax for teachers' wages in several years. In some districts Trustees who can do this are sought after. Such parsimoniousness on the part of Trustees and the less intelligent class of patrons leads to the employment of incompetent teachers and to frequent changes. It appears to be quite generally conceded that a more muscular, if not a better informed teacher, is required in winter than in summer: therefore in many districts, either a man, or a lady who has the reputation of keeping good order, is employed during the winter, but for the summer term the argument is: "Our schools will be small, and the children are not advanced in study; there will be only a little writing and ciphering and reading and spelling; anybody can teach these subjects; we can't afford to hire a high-priced teacher just to sit in the schoolroom with a few little children;" hence the cheapest (?) teacher that can be found is employed for the summer term.

ANOTHER PROLIFIC SOURCE

of evil in the Trustee system is, that in many districts there is a class of men who have no interest in the Common School, except to conduct the business of the district in the cheapest possible manner. Among this class are found even men of wealth and influence, who seek to overcome every effort put forth by those who would gladly elevate the schools. Schools under the control of this class of persons are virtually let to the highest bidder, no attention being given to the fitness, learning, experience, ability, or any other qualification of the applicant, except that he has some sort of license, so that he can teach a legal school. When a cheap teacher is once put into a school by a Trustee belonging to or controlled by this class, he is almost sure to be retained, whether he teaches a good school or a poor one.

ANOTHER EVIL

arising out of the Trustee system has foundation in the fact that the office of trustee is thankless and unpopular, and, in many instances, the most competent persons refuse to accept it; and in consequence of this the office falls to incompetent persons—frequently to those who are very ignorant. As a class, the Trustees of this State know very little about what a school should be, and they are certainly equally ignorant of the duties appertaining to their office; for example: of the 139 trustees' reports sent to me last fall, only seven were correct in every particular, and in some instances I have been compelled to drive to the district and make out the report myself in order to prevent the loss of the public money to the district. Deficient records respecting district boundaries, and the frequent changes in district lines, desired by taxpayers, are a constant source of trouble in districts, and of annoyance to the Commissioner.

HOW TO REMEDY THESE EVILS.

This evil and many others, would be remedied by the adoption of the township system of schools. Abolish district boundaries, and with them the quarrels that arise from misunderstandings about boundary lines. Have the school property now owned by each district, the property of the town in which it is situated. Let whatever local tax may be voted for the support of the schools be raised by a town tax without regard to former district boundaries, thereby equalizing the tax throughout the town. In place of the present district officers have a town board of directors.

According to the last report of Superintendent Gilmour, the per cent. of daily attendance upon the number of pupils registered for the year ending September 30, 1878, was 53; while in Pennsylvania, where the township system is in operation, for the year ending June 1, 1877, the average per cent. was 74. This, I believe, is owing to better schools and personal supervision. Our honored Superintendent of Public Instruction, in his report of 1877, said: "I believe that the existence of the present district system is a detriment to the interests of education." Your committee most heartily endorse this opinion, and recommend the adoption of the township system of schools.

A paper entitled "Some Facts about our Public School System" was read by C. W. Bardeen, (see pp. 1-30) and was followed by an earnest discussion of the Township System.

From the Committee upon the Revision of School Laws, Supt. Snow presented a verbal report, urging as the change immediately necessary the adoption of the Township System. A letter was read from Commissioner Dewey, of Franklin county, in favor of the Township System. Another letter was read from Commissioner Sawyer, saying that the Township System would encounter considerable opposition in Jefferson county. Against this statement as applied to the entire county, Commissioner Watson, who was present, afterwards protested, saying that the intelligent sentiment of his district was unanimous in its favor.

The following Committee of five was appointed to draft the outline of a bill

to be presented to the Legislature: State Superintendent Gilmour, and Messrs. Bardeen, Hooper, Riley and Johonnot. Supt. Gilmour asked to be excused and after some discussion Com. M. W. Smith was appointed in his place.

The following Committees were also appointed:

Finance—Messrs. Conover, Steves and Wickes.

Organization—Messrs. McLachlan, Mattison, and M. W. Smith.

Resolutions—Messrs. Johonnot, Brower, Andrews, Van Schaick and Robertson.

The Association then adjourned.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The Association was called to order at 2:45.

From the Committee on uniformity of Teachers' Examinations, Com. Riley presented resolutions, recommending that the Commissioners of each senatorial District meet semi-annually to prepare Questions.

Whereas, Great diversity exists in the standard with respect to the learning of candidates for teachers' certificates in the different counties of the State; and,

Whereas, The standard is liable to be changed in the same county by a change of Commissioners, thereby causing teachers great embarrassment; therefore,

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Association the test of the learning of candidates for certificates should be by written examination, and that the Commissioners of each Senatorial District be required to meet semi-annually at a time and place designated by the State Superintendent, to prepare a set of questions and agree upon a standard for the different grades of licenses.

Commissioner Andrews offered the following:

Resolved, That this Association is in favor of a law restricting candidates for school commissioner's license to persons who have already had two terms of successful experience in teaching, or who have attended two terms as a student at a normal school, or are possessed of a regent's certificate.

These resolutions were tabled.

Dr. H. B. Wilbur then read a paper on the German school system, and received the thanks of the Convention.

Mr. Smith, of Rome, from the Committee to draft a bill providing for the inauguration of the Township System, reported a resolution, embodying the features of a stringent and compulsory bill.

We urge the immediate adoption of an act embodying the following features:

1. Under penalty of forfeiting its public money, every town in this State shall, at the next town meeting after the first day of January, 1879, elect a Board of School Trustees, consisting of five members.

2. At their first meeting the Board of Trustees shall classify themselves by lot, to serve respectively one, two, three, four and five years; thereafter one Trustee shall be elected by each annual town meeting, to serve five years. Any vacancy occurring through death, removal or resignation, shall be filled until the next town meeting by appointment from the Supervisor, and shall then be filled by election for the unoccupied term.

3. To these Boards of Trustees shall be entrusted all the powers and duties now pertaining to District Trustees, so far as the same are not inconsistent with the other sections of the act.

4. The Board of Trustees of every town shall annually determine the amount of school tax, which, together with such additional sums as the town may be entitled to receive from the State appropriation and the other sources, may be sufficient and necessary to keep the schools of the town in successful operation for not less than twenty-eight weeks in each year; and the Board of Supervi-

sors shall levy the same upon the property of the town as a part of the annual town tax.

5. At the time of making their first assessment after the passage of this act, the assessors of each town shall appraise all the school property, belonging to the several districts of the town, and the Board of Supervisors shall assess the amount upon the entire property of the town, to be collected with the next town tax; and shall remit to the tax-payers of each district the amount at which their school property was appraised, under the provisions now applying to the property of dissolved districts.

6. If it shall be found that, on account of great distance from or difficulty of access to the proper town, some of the pupils would be more conveniently accommodated in the schools of an adjoining town, it shall be the duty of Trustees of such towns to make an arrangement by which such pupils may be instructed in the most convenient school of the adjoining town, and the expense of such instruction shall be paid as may agreed upon by the Trustees of such adjoining towns by resolution or agreement entered upon the minutes of the respective Boards.

The report was discussed by sections. Amendments were accepted by the Committee providing that the election of Trustees shall be upon separate ballot, and that each Board of Trustees shall have power to hire a clerk. As thus amended, the first two sections were adopted. The Association then adjourned, to accept an invitation to witness the working of the telephone.

EVENING SESSION.

The attendance at the Academy was large. After a fine quartette, Gov. Seymour was introduced, and spoke upon simplicity of language.

Miss Fannie Kingsley then sang, "Under the Maple Tree," with much sweetness and effect.

Dr. Mears, of Hamilton College, followed, and after a piano duett, Mr. McMillan introduced James H. Hoose, Ph. D., of the Cortland Normal School, who read a lengthy paper, "What are the Common Schools in the State of New York at the Present Time?" (See pp. 33 and following.)

Miss Mulholland, by special request, then sang the "Bride of Dundee." For an encore she sang, "Kathleen Mavourneen."

Hon. Neil Gilmour was then introduced and received with applause. He made a few brief remarks, and spoke highly in regard to the schools of Utica, and also of Gov. Seymour's messages in regard to education, when he occupied the Gubernatorial chair. The speaker then read some selections from the speeches.

The school quartette sang, "Home, Sweet Home," and the meeting was adjourned.

THIRD DAY.—THURSDAY, FEB. 21.

MORNING SESSION.

The Association convened at 9:30, and resumed the discussion of the proposed bill establishing the Township System. The report of the Committee was adopted without further amendments.

The following resolution was offered by Mr. Pooler and unanimously carried:

Resolved. That a Committee of five be appointed who may solicit and receive suggestions from School Commissioners and other educational men during the next ten days, and shall then prepare, or cause to be prepared, and present to the Legislature, a bill for establishing a township system of public schools in this State, in accordance with the report of the Committee upon that subject.

President McMillan appointed as such Committee Messrs. Danforth, Bardeen, Riley, Provost and Hooper.

Mr. Danforth being obliged to decline, Com. Morehouse was added to the Committee in his place.

Mr. Farnham thought the proceedings of the Convention should be printed and distributed throughout the State. He offered a resolution providing for the raising of a fund for the publication of the minutes, which was adopted, and the following subscriptions were received :

Messrs. Hoose and Bardeen, \$10.00 each.

Messrs. Gilmour, McMillan, McLean and Kennedy, \$5.00 each.

Messrs. Johnnot, Taylor and Button, \$2.00 each.

Com. Thos. J. Platt, \$1.50.

Messrs. Ladd, Northam, Harvey, Lewis, Farnham, Wickes, Freeman, De Graff, Straddling, Evans, Pugh, Crissy, Holbrook, McLachlan, Holcomb, Lantry, Wheelock, Steves, Woodruff, Van Valkenburgh, Robertson, Watson, Shattuck, Snow, North, Brower, Cable, Button, Smith, Riley, Clark, Andrews, Conover, Provost, C. V. Hooper, J. W. Hooper, Shurter, Posson, Bacon, Smith, Roe, Cole, Reed, Browning, Benjamin and Morehouse, \$1.00 each.

Messrs. Howe, Ryer, Quigley, Dewey, Barnes and George, 50 cts. each.

Messrs. Whittemore, Van Tuyl, Cottrell and Goodale, 25 cts. each.

From the Committee on Teachers' Institutes, Commissioner Thos. S. Mount, of Suffolk Co., who was unable to be present, had forwarded a report, which was received by the Association and ordered placed on file.

Commissioner Andrews read a paper on "Uniformity of Text Books," of which the following is an abstract :

About one-half of the School Commissioners, representing in whole or in part three-fourths of the counties of the State, have reported to your Committee. Their reports show :

1st—That school books were adopted last fall under the Text Book Act in eighty-three per cent. of the school districts.

2d—That seventy per cent. of these districts adopted new books entirely or to an extent exceeding one fourth, while the remaining thirty per cent. adopted their old books, or made but slight changes.

3d—That in twenty-eight per cent. of the commissioner districts virtual uniformity exists.

4th—That in seventy-five per cent. of the commissioner districts there is uniformity in individual school districts.

5th—That the Commissioners, more than two to one, are opposed on general principles to a State Commission to enforce uniformity; but that by nearly two to one they are in favor of a county commission for the same purpose.

6th—That those opposing and those favoring either commission nearly all agree that any such action should be deferred for five years, as a matter of justice to those districts that have endeavored in good faith to carry out the provisions of the present law.

Commissioner Riley called up his resolution (elsewhere printed) relating to uniformity of teachers' examinations, which was debated with spirit by Messrs. Brower, Smith and Riley.

Finally Mr. Brower moved to table.

The motion to table was carried.

Mr. B. B. Snow, of Auburn, offered the following :

Whereas, Sentiments opposed to the policy of higher or secondary education in the public schools of the State have found expression from various sources, and more especially within the past year; and whereas, the experiences and intimate relations of the members of this Association with public education not only warrant but demand an expression of opinion upon the question; therefore,

Resolved, That the question of higher or secondary education is one that should be determined exclusively by the localities affected, and may be prop-

erly left to such localities without general or specific restrictive legislation upon the subject.

Resolved, That the influence of higher or academic schools, in raising the standard and promoting the efficiency of rudimentary schools, far outweighs the expense of maintaining them; and that the severest blow to rudimentary schools would be the discontinuance of advanced schools.

Resolved, That the State of New York cannot afford to take any steps backward in relation to the public schools, nor impair their efficiency as compared with the public schools of other States, nor encourage a lower standard of general intelligence than such as the age demands for the best interests of all classes of community.

The resolutions were unanimously adopted.

THE NEXT MEETING.

The next Convention is recommended by the Committee to be held in Ithaca, on the third Tuesday in February, 1879.

In spite of his protestations, the Convention re-elected Andrew McMillan President, and the following named officers: Vice President, Superintendent Foster; Corresponding Secretary, Superintendent David Beattie; Recording Secretary, Commissioner A. W. Morehouse; Treasurer, Commissioner C. T. Andrews.

RESOLUTIONS.

The following resolutions were offered by Mr. Johonnot:

Whereas. After giving careful consideration to all the objections urged against the State support of high schools, we have come to the deliberate conclusion that such objections are based upon imperfect comprehension of the facts, and upon a false philosophy in regard to the functions of the State, and are supported by fallacies of logic and unwarranted inferences; therefore,

Resolved, That we believe that State aid to higher education is a legitimate function of the State; that, more than this, it is the duty of the State to provide opportunity for the broadest general culture of all; that we regard the efforts made to curtail education as blows dealt directly at the life of the public schools; and that the question in regard to the character and amount of higher education is one of expediency, to be decided by each community in accordance with its own needs and circumstances.

The first resolution was adopted. The second was then read, as follows:

Resolved, That, without expressing an opinion as to the original wisdom of the Text-Book act, we believe that justice to the districts which, in good faith, have endeavored to carry out its provisions, requires that it should be left in force for the term of five years, but with amendments that will secure uniformity in each school, that will encourage uniformity in the county, and will secure to indigent children the necessary Text-Books.

The resolution was tabled after debate.

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE.

At their first meeting, held on Feb. 21, it was agreed by the Committee to meet at Albany, March 5, and in the mean time to give the subject careful study and consultation with educational men. Accordingly the circular given on pp. 31, 32, was sent to all school commissioners and city superintendents, and to many other prominent gentlemen.

Replies were received from Commissioners Barber, Barnes, Benjamin, Brower, Browning, Conover, Cottrell, Dewey, Freeman, Goodale, Hardick, J. W. Hooper, Hyatt, Partridge, Posson, Pratt, Pugh, Quigley, Reed, Robertson, Ryer, Smith, Van Tuyl, Watson, Whittemore and Wilson, and from Superintendent McMillan, of Utica; John E. Bradley, Principal of the Albany High

School; and Sherman Williams, Principal of the Flushing High School. Commissioner Posson expressed himself opposed to the Township System. Commissioner Benjamin did not approve of the details given, but would be in favor of a suitable plan. Commissioner Cottrell was doubtful. Every other one of these gentlemen declared himself in favor of it, most of them with marked emphasis. These letters have been placed on file with the Minutes of the Association.

The members of the Committee also spent considerable time and labor in seeking out and conversing with prominent teachers and school officers. The Chairman visited Boston, and obtained from the Secretary of the State Board of Education, Hon. J. W. Dickinson, a detailed history of the adoption of the Township System in Massachusetts. Before their meeting, the members of the Committee called upon the State Superintendent, and upon the chairmen of the educational committees of the Assembly and of the Senate.

As a result of this investigation, the Committee became convinced that a measure so radical as that approved by the Association at Utica could not possibly pass the Legislature. In virtue of the authority granted them they decided to present a bill which would be comparatively unobjectionable to those who are opposed to the Township System or undecided in regard to it, while it should at the same time make it possible for towns which so elect to give the System a fair trial. The bill simply enlarges the scope of Title nine of the Code of Public Instruction, relating to union free schools, by permitting a majority of the aggregate number of voters in all the districts of the towns, at meetings called for this purpose, to consolidate all the districts of the town into one union free school district, under the general act. In presenting this bill, the Committee believe that they have hit upon that form of the Township System which is best adapted to the present condition and needs of our public schools, and that this bill, whether or not it be passed by the Legislature, will lead to discussion which will eventually transform all the towns in this State into union free school districts.

The Committee were accorded a special hearing by the Assembly Committee on Education, on the evening of March 5, and as a result of this meeting, the following bill was presented in the Assembly, March 6, by Hon. Maurice B. Flynn, of Kings county, a member of the Committee on Public Education. It was referred back to the Committee, and will be immediately printed. Copies may be obtained of the Hon. D. W. C. Peck, Chairman, Assembly Chamber, Albany.

AN ACT to amend Chapter five hundred and fifty-five of the laws of eighteen hundred and fifty-four, entitled "An act to revise and consolidate the general acts relating to public instruction."

The People of the State of New York, represented in the Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section four of title nine of chapter five hundred and fifty-five of the laws of eighteen hundred and sixty-four, entitled "An act to revise and consolidate the general acts relating to public instruction" is hereby amended so as to read as follows:

§4. Whenever fifteen persons, entitled as aforesaid from each of two or more districts, shall unite in a call for a meeting of the inhabitants of such districts, to determine whether such districts shall be consolidated by the establishment of a union free school therefor and therein, or, whenever five persons from each of a majority of the school districts of the town shall sign a call for meet-

ings in the several school districts of the town, to determine whether all the school districts of the town shall be consolidated by the establishment of a union free school district for the entire town, etc., (the rest of the section being unchanged.)

SEC. 2. Section five of said title nine is hereby amended so as to read as follows:

§5. Any such meeting, held as aforesaid, shall be organized by the appointment of a chairman and a secretary, and may be adjourned from time to time, by a majority vote, provided such an adjournment shall not be for a longer period than ten days; and whenever, *when the proposed union school district does not embrace all the school districts of the town*, any such meeting, at which not less than fifteen persons entitled to vote thereat, shall by the affirmative vote of a majority present and voting, determine to establish a union free school in said district, pursuant to such notice, it shall thereupon be lawful for such meeting to proceed to the election by ballot, of not less than three, nor more than nine trustees, who shall by the order of such meeting, be divided into three several classes—the first to hold until one, the second until two, and the third until three years from the second Tuesday of October coincident with or following, except in the cases in the next section provided for; and when the trustees so elected shall enter upon their office, the office of any existing trustee or trustees shall cease, except for the purposes stated in section eleven of title six of this act; and whenever, *when the proposed union free school district embraces all the school districts of the town*, such meetings at each of which not less than fifteen persons entitled to vote thereat shall by a majority of those present and voting at all such meetings determine to establish a union free school for the said town, pursuant to such notice, the result of such election to be determined and announced by the town clerk, from the minutes of such meetings, to be deposited with him as hereinafter provided, it shall thereafter be required, at the next subsequent town meeting, to proceed to the election by separate ballot, to be endorsed "School Trustees" in the same manner as town officers thereof, nine trustees, who shall at their first meeting classify themselves by lot into three several classes—the first class to hold until one, the second until two, and the third until three years from the said town meeting. And when the trustees so elected shall enter upon their office, the office of any existing trustee or trustees shall cease, except for the purpose stated in section eleven of title six of this act. —The said trustees and their successors in office shall constitute a Board of Education of and for the union free school district for which they are elected, and the designation of such district as union free school district Number — of the town of — or as the union free school of the town of —, etc., (the rest of this section being unchanged.)

§3. Section fourteen of said title nine is hereby amended, by adding to the last sentence of said section, the following clause:

Except that in union free school districts for an entire town, the school district meeting shall be the annual town meeting.

§4. Section twenty-seven of said title nine is hereby amended by adding to the last sentence the following clause:

And also to any school district organized pursuant to a special act of the Legislature.

§5. This act shall take effect immediately.

In conclusion, the Committee assure the Association that they have labored earnestly to perform satisfactorily the duty entrusted to them. They take pleasure in returning thanks to the members of the educational committees of both the Assembly and the Senate, and especially to their chairmen, for courteous and careful attention to their representations.

C. W. BARDEEN, A. J. PROVOST,
A. W. MOREHOUSE, J. B. RILEY.

ALBANY, March 6, 1878.

SOME FACTS ABOUT OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM.

BY C. W. BARDEEN, SYRACUSE.

All true philosophy is founded on facts. All wise legislation is based upon statistics. Laws, like coats, must be made to order. They are useless unless they fit.

Laws have been constructed upon general principles. The Compulsory Act is an example. On general principles, much could be said in its favor. It is deplorable that so large a ratio of our school population stays out of the school-room. It seems reasonable that those who pay taxes for popular education, because popular education is a popular necessity, should demand that this popular necessity be met by ensuring that popular education be universal. It is not impossible that a bill wisely drawn might have been effective and useful. But the framer of the law knew nothing of our public school system. He named officers who do not exist, he made no provision for enlarged school-accommodation in places where children who voluntarily come are excluded; he forgot to provide money to carry out the law, and penalties to enforce it. The Compulsory Law was a ready-made coat, too large in the waist, too wide in the back, too long in the sleeves. The few districts which put it on, took it off when they were ridiculed by the nearest county judge, and the rest of us have never undone the package it came in.

Last winter, we were thrust into another ready-made coat. This one was too tight. It pinched. In order to decrease the changes in text-books for the next five years, the State made in five months twice as many changes as in the preceding five years. It cost us a million dollars because the Albany clothing-house neglected to measure the district-meetings before it made a coat for them.

The school-system of New York was not made. It is an institution, a growth. He who would amend it must first understand it; and that he can do only by studying its history. Every line of the law is the result of experience and careful discussion. Such men as Clinton and Hawley and Dix and Spencer and Randall have given time and labor to the construction of a school-system worthy of the Empire State. It is imperfect; in many features we have outgrown it; to the thoughtful, intelligent, patriotic statesmen it affords a rich field for investigation, for study and for action. But let the smatterer, the charlatan stand aloof. Our free schools are never to be the foot-ball of politics.

By repeated resolutions, this association stands committed to the Township System of schools. Your honored president has been its most persistent as he was perhaps its earliest advocate. The State Superintendent, the official head of our school system, but especially your direct representative, has made his advocacy of this change the most memorable feature of his administration. Now that this matter is to be brought to an issue, it becomes you, as it certainly does me, representing a school-journal committed to this movement, to be able to justify the faith which is in us. I therefore ask your consideration of such facts as I have been able to gather from the history and present condition of our school-system, which bear upon the question before us.

The first fact to which I would call your attention is that we have at present no effective supervision of district schools. This is at once established by statistics. The only supervision of more than 11,000 school-districts is by 112 district Commissioners, an average to each officer of more than 100 schools, scattered over an average area of 400 square miles. If the Commissioner has nothing else to do, and can afford to own and keep a good horse and wagon, he may be able to visit each of these schools twice during the 140 days each year the law requires them to be in session. In the Code of Public Instruction, it is assumed that a faithful Commissioner will usually be able to do this.

Sometimes he does it. He spends a little time at the school, sees that the teacher has a certificate, gets what idea he can of her skill in discipline and instruction, gives her good counsel, hears a class or two, makes a speech to the scholars, calls on the trustee and tells him the school seems to be in fair condition, and then drives on to the next district in great haste, grudging the time he has spent, not because he is uninterested in his work but because if he don't hurry he can't "get around."

When he visits this school again he probably meets another teacher. He found the first teacher getting started, and under the circumstances doing very well. He finds the second teacher getting started; under the circumstances *she* is doing very well. This satisfies him that he is safe in renewing her license to teach, but gives him no basis for determining whether the school has made progress. She has probably introduced a new classification, a new course of study, new methods of teaching. Even if the Commissioner can remember how these individual pupils recited six months ago, he has no time to examine them closely for evidence of progress. Indeed, why should he expect progress? It takes the teacher a term to get started. By that time she is displaced and the school is started again. So the pupils begin at the beginning, term after term, repeating in a school-room of the nineteenth century the toils of a Sisyphus in Hades.

It is plain that such supervision as this, though better than nothing, is by no means effective. In an imperfect way, it affords a basis for granting licenses to teach, and for giving hints to earnest or ambitious teachers. Unfortunately, not all teachers are either earnest or ambitious.

"Be you an author?" asked a young lady of me, at a social levee which followed an institute in one of the northern counties of the State.

I replied that I sometimes got things into print when I paid for my own type-setting.

"I'm so glad to talk with a real live author," she continued, "for I am literary, myself."

"Are you, indeed?" I replied.

"O yes," she went on; "why, I read through the whole Waverly Novels last term: twenty-five volumes."

I suggested that she must have sat up late o' nights.

"O no," she said "I read 'em all in school-time."

Didn't that interfere with her classes?

"O no. Short lessons and long recesses. They liked it and so did I."

Upon such a teacher, no compulsion is laid to follow the Commissioner's suggestions. She dreads his visit, she gets through it as smoothly as she can, she sighs with relief when he departs, and she gives him no further thought till it is time to get her certificate renewed. Were there some permanence among teachers, some uniformity in courses of study, especially some local supervisor to whom he could point out the faults seen and repeat the suggestions made, the Commissioner's visit would have more effect. As it is, even the little help he can give his teachers is wasted because of their indifference.

I have depicted the work of an ideal Commissioner: one who is competent, faithful, earnest, and who can give all his time to supervision. Without pausing to remark that there have been or that there might be Commissioners not wholly competent, faithful and earnest, I would call attention to the fact that those who are personally all that could be desired can not give their entire time to supervision. On the contrary, much of their work, and by far the hardest and most perplexing, consists in the adjustment of district boundaries.

At the last annual meeting of the Regents of the University, a report was received from the committee appointed by the State Legislature to cooperate with a similar committee from Pennsylvania in verifying the boundary between the two States. This boundary line was established by the original grant to William Penn, in 1681, and has been undisturbed. Moreover, it is a parallel of latitude, and therefore easily determined. Furthermore, it runs through a populous and wealthy region, where every acre of land is valuable and an exact survey is of the utmost importance. Surely if ever a boundary is fixed, this should be. What is the fact? Why, that boundary, as staked out and recognized, hardly ever touches the 42d parallel of latitude. At Great Bend, it juts 350 feet into Pennsylvania. South of Elmira, it bends a thousand feet into New York. To make that boundary in fact what it is by law, would change the citizenship of thousands who live along the the border. Now if the boundary between the two wealthiest States of the Union, established two hundred years ago, upon a parallel of latitude, has not been fixed within a fifth of a mile, what shall we say of the boundaries of eleven thousand school districts?

Listen to the experience of our present Commissioners, as narrated in the last annual report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, (1877.)

Commissioner Beals, of Otsego county, says:

Some of the districts have been described by persons who knew nothing of surveying or of giving correct boundaries, and the consequence is that those districts which *are* described are not perfectly bounded. In fact, *no* shape can be traced from existing bounds. (P. 383.)

Commissioner Bush, of Chemung county:

No record of the boundaries of four towns could be found, and in the others they are neither plain nor complete. (P. 299.)

In this connection, let me add the statement of Commissioner Morehouse, of Cayuga, made at a recent association, that in his district *not one* town-clerk had the required records of district boundaries. In Clinton county, Commissioner Riley settled a dispute as to the boundary of a certain district, where quite an amount was involved and an appeal was taken to the State Superintendent. Commissioner Riley was sustained, he had the map carefully prepared, and he deposited it in the town-clerk's office. Within a year, he had occasion to consult it, he called for it, and *it could not be found*.

But the law permits injustice, as well as perplexity. Let us continue, from the Superintendent's last report.

Commissioner Wright, of Westchester county:

Another matter of disapproval is the constantly recurring wrangles with reference to *district boundary lines*. Some of these boundary lines seem to possess the elasticity of rubber, and appear or disappear with the erratic movements of a comet or a meteoric shower. There is nearly as much diversity of opinion in a district as regards its boundaries as there are inhabitants therein; and some childless, well-to-do citizen, with a natural aversion to tax-paying, whose residence is contiguous to the supposed boundary, finds it exceedingly convenient to place himself at will in the district blessed with the fewest privileges and the lowest assessment list. (P. 429.)

Commissioner Reed, of Putnam county, gives a practical illustration of this:

Districts Nos. 3 and 4 in the town of Kent, join. No. 1 reported 62 children of school age, and an assessed valuation of \$13,000. No. 4 reported 48 children of school age, and an assessed valuation of \$45,000. Of the amount reported by No. 4, probably \$12,000 is within the bounds of No. 3, and since the reports were made, property representing about \$4,000 of the amount reported by No. 3 has been purchased by persons residing in No. 4, (thus leaving only \$9,000 of the \$25,000 situated in No. 3, subject to school-tax in No. 3.) Yet No. 3 has always supported the better school, and for a longer time. As the whole of this property is worked by the owners who reside on the adjoining property in No. 4, the taxes will be paid in that district. As the law now is, there is no way to prevent one district from absorbing all the taxable property of another, and leave it entirely without means to support a school. (P. 387.)

The possibility and frequency of sharp practice in this matter of district boundaries is even better illustrated by Commissioner Dewey, of Franklin county:

As a rule, the inhabitants are poor, and the taxes on the non-resident lands contribute largely to the support of the schools. On examination of the condition of those districts and their bounds, I found this means of support very unequally distributed. Some districts, seeing the advantage derived from a large amount of territory, had managed to have all the vacant lands adjoining set into their district, and in some cases nearly surrounded their less energetic neighbors. In this way the large districts would erect a good, comfortable school-house, and secure the services of competent teachers, at a mere nominal expense to themselves, while the small, feeble districts, shut in a small territory, and dependent on their own resources, became discouraged. (P. 327.)

It must not be inferred from these instances, and hundreds like them which

you can supply from your own experience, that people are particularly mean in evading their school-tax. People evade all taxes, as far as they can. Hardly a week ago a showman tried to pass through the custom-house two big monkeys imported for exhibition on the ground that they were immigrants; he offered to show that they could say "yes" and "no" in German, and contended that they were therefore human beings. Death and taxes are recognized as inevitable, but they are seldom welcome.

Now in the present indefinite state of district boundaries, there is every temptation to get into the district when the school-tax is lightest, and hence the Commissioner has to contend not only with uncertainty, but with close-fisted dishonesty. It is avarice which gives the venom to these contests over district boundaries. Hence it is a tedious and thankless task to interfere; even after the decision is rendered and sustained by the Department, seeds of bitterness remain to spring up in every succeeding year. Not only, therefore, is much of the Commissioner's time, often one third, occupied by these disputes, but his influence is weakened, and the school suffers by the animosities which have been developed in the district.

We have seen that the whole time and care of the Commissioner would be insufficient to secure effective supervision; we have shown that even if it were sufficient, it can not be given, since much of it is occupied with disputes resulting only in injury to the school. Is it not then an established fact, that our district schools have no effective supervision?

Some who are not acquainted with our schools may ask: "Does not the law put them under the supervision of trustees?"

"It is a noticeable fact, that not one of the reports of the State Superintendents of the last thirty years even refers to trustees under the topic of supervision."

I made the above statement at a county association, not long ago, and I was interrupted. A trustee who was present insisted that Supt. Gilmour's report for 1876 spoke of supervision by trustees. The passage is as follows:

In the rural districts the schools are mostly ungraded, and such supervision as they receive is exercised by trustees, and by School-Commissioners elected by the people. Trustees, I have reason to believe, seldom visit the schools under their charge, in many cases care little what kind of a school they have, and oftentimes endeavor to popularize their administration by "running as cheap a school as possible." (P. 49.)

The trustee was right, you see.

"Be-gorra, the king shpoke to me," boasted an Irishman, soon after the passage of a royal personage through the village.

"And fwhat did he shpake to ye?" was the eager response.

"'Get out o' the road, ye shirty blackguard,' was his very words," and Pat strutted on.

Supt. Gilmour has "shpoke" of supervision by trustees, but he is the only one. Why the others have neglected them, will appear when we quote, presently, from the statements made by Commissioners in the Superintendent's last report. It may be mentioned, incidentally, that the supervision exercised by the trustee of District No. 12, Constantia, who can neither read nor write,

but who has just been re-elected, by a German trustee near Palmyra who can not speak a word of English, by a trustee near Syracuse who hires himself as teacher, might not be all that is contemplated under that term. There was a trustee in Homer, last year, who could neither read nor write. He was not re-elected, but the district showed the effect of his supervision by formally voting to use for the next five years "whatever text books they damn please."

Do our schools need effective supervision ?

If not, all our educational authorities are strangely at fault.

State Superintendent Weaver, said :

No comprehensive system of education, embracing so wide a field as ours, and requiring such an extended subdivision of labor, will produce results much better, or much worse, than the character of the supervision it employs. (Report, 1872, p. 55.)

State Superintendent Henry S. Randall, said :

It is a point generally conceded among those familiar with the subject of education, that the success of public schools depends more upon supervision than upon any other one agency; that this is, indeed, that indispensable one agency without which all others have failed. Legislation may provide bountifully for the education of teachers; it may prescribe high standards of qualification; it may make stringent and wise regulations in regard to the duties of all connected with the administration of the system: but parsimony will evade, ignorance maladminister, or apathy render inefficient the best school laws, unless their execution is watched over and enforced by intelligent, active and independent supervision. (Report, 1854, pp. 25-6.)

Can the need be stated more clearly? Need I go on to quote from Horace Mann and every other educational authority ?

There is one especial need of supervision peculiar to this State: I refer to the classification of teachers. There are to-day scores of good teachers who are out of employment; there are hundreds of capable men engaged in other occupations who were born teachers, but whose labor is better rewarded in other vocations; there are thousands of poor teachers who are at work in the school-room. Why is this? Because there is no thorough system of classification, by which the public may distinguish the good teacher from the poor one.

Almost all our good teachers are underpaid. What is the remedy? To raise the wages of teachers by act of Legislature? to establish a system of pensions for them to nibble on when they are used up and turned out to grass?

By no means. That would but increase the competition for positions. A sole trustee in Oswego county was elected about half-past eight o'clock in the evening of the second Tuesday of October. Before noon the next day, he had received forty-two applications for his school, and not one of the candidates asked for higher wages or for a pension. If those attractions had been added to the position, the trustee would have had to barricade his house.

All that good teachers ask, all that they need, is a system of discrimination. Ensure to them that only competent teachers shall be employed, that success in the school-room shall be recognized and rewarded, even that the preference among several applicants shall be given to the most worthy, and they will be willing to let the wages take care of themselves.

At present, good teachers have no such encouragement. Aside from the

nepotism, the subservience to political magnates, the weak good nature which consults the need of some friendless girl for a place rather than the need of the school for a teacher, and the many other considerations which lead trustees to choose upon other grounds than that of fitness, there remains the plain fact that we have no standard of fitness.

Certificates are, to be sure, of three grades, and certain general principles for granting them are laid down in the Code. But usage varies most lamentably. The firm with which I am connected prints most of the certificates issued by Commissioners of this State, and from their orders we can judge how many licenses of each grade they grant. The usual proportion is one of the first grade to two of the second and three of the third. But some Commissioners use more of the first grade than of the third; another uses none at all of the third grade; about one-fourth use an equal number of each grade. Of course there is no such difference as this in the qualifications of the teachers in the different counties, and consequently the grade of the certificate is a circumstance which deserves and which receives little consideration.

The only Commissioner in this State who ever gave me a certificate was a graduate of Brown University, was afterward a member of the Assembly, and is now the editor of a leading Republican paper. He once announced a teachers' examination at the school-house where I taught. Few teachers came, and he invited my highest class to enter. They passed pretty well, and he gave to every member, including two boys twelve years old, first grade certificates.

In one of the Hudson River counties a prominent politician wrote to the commissioner that his daughter would be unable to attend his examination but would like a first-grade certificate. The obliging commissioner sent one by return mail. The politician then published in the local papers his own letter, the letter of the Commissioner, and the certificate, which stated that, having examined Miss Flora Smith, and having ascertained her qualifications in respect to moral character, learning and ability to instruct a Common School, he hereby certified that she was duly qualified, and that her experience in and devotion to the profession entitled her to the rank of a teacher of the First Grade. Appended to these documents was the interesting information that if Miss Florence Smith lived to the 17th of next July she would be two years old.

But apart from all the diversity of practice upon the part of Commissioners, it is impossible for them to grade teachers with entire accuracy, owing principally to the continual changes among them, and the lack of a settled course of study in their schools.

John Phœnix used to complain of the want of gradation in English adjectives. We use big ones to describe little things, and when we come to a big thing we have no adjectives left. You know the story of the Frenchman who went to Niagara. He had derived his knowledge of the language from colloquial use, and applied it accordingly. So when he got to Suspension Bridge and saw the water-fall in the distance, he called out "Sublime." When he stood over the American fall and saw the water glide over the precipice, he cried "Magnificent." But when he crept under the Horse-shoe fall, and realized what a

fearful mass of water was plunging down, hour after hour, day and night, year by year, for the first time he felt the real spirit of the cataract; his soul was moved, and in trembling tones he uttered the American superlative: "Pretty good!"

Now the ingenious Mr. Phoenix proposed that instead of three degrees of comparison we have a hundred, and indicate them by numerals. We could then be exact in our language. Thus, instead of:

On a very beautiful day in midsummer, an extremely lovely maiden leaned upon the arm of an excessively handsome youth in tenderest ecstasy, when very suddenly a horribly cruel parent appeared with an appallingly heavy cane and put the ever so pitiable young man into very abject terror,

We should have:

On a 76 per cent. fine day in midsummer, an 80 per cent. lovely maiden leaned upon the arm of a 100 per cent. handsome youth (I assume that the author is a woman; otherwise these two percentages should be reversed,) in 94 per cent. ecstasy, when 100 per cent. suddenly, a 92 per cent. cruel parent appeared with a 78 per cent. heavy cane, and put the 99 per cent. pitiable young man into 83 per cent. abject terror.

You see at once what delicate shades of meaning could be conveyed, should this plan be adopted: I am not sure but it will come in with the Spelling Reform. But even if percentage be impracticable in the case of adjectives, it should not be in the case of teachers. Surely there should be some more definite way of grading teachers than one which gives such an estimate as this, which I heard made by a commissioner, not long since:

O well, she is fair to middling. She might do well and then again she might not. She has some good points and probably you could not do much better than to hire her, but you can't always tell.

You have heard something like this before:

My name's Jack Bunsby, and what I says I stands to. Do I believe that this here Son and Heir's gone down, my lads? Mayhap. Do I say so? Which? The bearings of this observation lays in the application of it. That aint no part of my duty. (*Dombey & Son, Chapter XXIII*)

It is of this imperfect and indifferent valuation of their services that teachers complain. School supervision is not merely surveillance.

An inspection is a visit for the purposes of observation, of oversight, of superintendence. Its aim is to observe the tone and spirit of the school, the conduct and application of the pupils, the management and methods of the teacher, and the fitness and condition of the premises. Good inspection commends excellence; gently indicates faults, defects and errors; and suggests improvement as occasion requires. By the expectation of visits of inspection of the right sort, teachers are stimulated to fidelity and to efforts for advancement in efficiency. While inspection has for its object to stimulate, encourage and guide both teachers and pupils, this is not the limit of its scope. It has another important purpose: that of enabling the inspector to acquire valuable information as a basis for action in the administration of the system. (*30th Report, Boston, Sept 1876, p. 84.*)

Theoretically, then, all authorities agree that our schools need efficient supervision. But we are dealing with facts. Does the condition of our schools today show the need of a better system of supervision?

Our authority on this subject must be the reports of the School Commis-

sioners. Let us take the last report of the State Superintendent, and call upon the Commissioners by counties to relate their experience.

Commissioner McCulloch, of Albany county, what have you to say upon this subject?

Commissioner McCulloch speaks:

One of the most serious obstacles in the way of progress is indifference on the part of trustees. In some cases the schools have been let to the lowest bidder, without regard to the wants of the districts. (P. 287.)

Commissioner Sisson, of Albany county:

The schools are too small to be first class without being burdensome, except in the villages. Nominally our schools are said to be free, but practically they are not. Taxation is very unequal, for while the larger schools, the village schools, receive from the school fund and tax sufficient to pay teachers for from eight to ten months in the year, the smaller school districts must necessarily pay additional school tax to keep open the required time to participate in the public or school money. (Pp. 288-9.)

Commissioner McIntosh, of Allegany county:

Another prolific source of the condition of schools and school houses is the custom of electing trustees who are incompetent to perform the duties of the office, and who have no interest in the school, except to hire the cheapest teacher, and, generally, to conduct the business of the district in the cheapest possible manner. (P. 290)

Commissioner Wallace, of Cattaraugus county:

People, in selecting a trustee, do not usually consider his qualifications, but generally choose the most illiterate and disinterested person in the district. The school houses in my district, as a general rule, are in a dilapidated condition, and do not compare with other public buildings in the district. (Pp. 294-5)

Commissioner Morehouse, of Cayuga county:

After visiting the schools of this district, I am compelled to say that I have been sadly disappointed in finding the schools so poorly cared for, and so inefficient. I believe that it is impossible to elevate the grade of our schools until we can have better teachers, and we can never have better teachers until we have better school officers. (P. 296-7.)

Commissioner Bush, of Chemung county:

In most parts of the county there is evinced very little interest in schools. Many of the school houses are uncomfortable, uncared for and unfurnished. Many of the privies have no vaults. Some appear not to have been cleaned since they were built, and, in a few instances, the stench from this source is in summer unpleasantly perceptible in the school-room. Two school-houses have no privies at all. No. 3, Erin, has a new school-house, but no privy, as the district did not vote to build one, and the trustees neglect to, although directed to do so by the Commissioner. (P. 299-300.)

Commissioner Freeman, of Chenango county:

I think I can see defects which can never be wholly obviated under the present management. Until township schools are organized, under the management of town boards, I fear we shall not attain the highest excellence in our schools; until then we may not secure uniformity in new school-houses, text-books, and a uniform grading of schools and teachers, together with the permanent appointment of professional teachers. The present system is faulty in many particulars. Often the trustees are men who have no interest in the schools, except a money interest, and a desire to make them as cheap as possible. Again, they are usually changed every year, and the consequence is that the whole school undergoes a change—a change of teacher, a change in the whole make-up of the school, a change in its character and quality, and the reports to the Commissioner scarcely intelligible, and many of them positively wrong. (P. 303.)

Commissioner Barber, of Chenango county:

There are, perhaps, no duties directly connected with the interests of our common schools of greater importance than those resting upon trustees, and yet, in many of our districts, men wholly incompetent to fulfil the duties of the office are elected. The results often are, cheap teachers, dear schools, any amount of trouble in the district. Could some change be made in this, it would greatly serve the interest of our public schools. (P. 305.)

Commissioner Riley, of Clinton county:

Of the eighty-four districts in this commissioner district, which employ but one teacher each, only twenty-three employed the same teacher for two consecutive terms. No real progress can reasonably be expected when the teacher has been retained just long enough to become acquainted with the needs of the different pupils, and is then dismissed and the place filled with another, who traverses the same ground and experiences the same difficulties. In my opinion, many of the hindrances to good schools that necessarily grow out of the district organization would be overcome by placing the schools of the town under the control of a Town Board of Education, consisting of nine members, to be elected by the voters of the town. (P. 307-8.)

Commissioner Whitbeck, of Columbia county:

This commissioner district is composed mostly of farming districts. We have no incorporated village within our bounds. Our wants are many. Among others, we want reconstruction in our organization and government. Let there be elected in each town, at its annual town meeting, two school inspectors, each elector voting for one candidate, thus removing all political considerations in the government of schools. Let the Board of Education hire the teachers of the district, and elect once in three years a School Commissioner, who shall be secretary of the Board of Education. Let the amount annually raised by the State as public moneys for distribution be considerably increased, and the remainder of the money necessary for the maintenance of the schools of the district be audited by the Board of Supervisors, and assessed by them upon all taxable property of the district. (P. 311)

Commissioner Van Valkenburg, of Columbia county:

The schools under my jurisdiction I shall class as Nos. 1, 2 and 3, and limit them geographically. The territory under my supervision extends from the Hudson River on the West to the Massachusetts line on the east. The schools that I class as No. 1 are those in the Western section, the most fertile and productive, and also the most densely populated. In this section we have the largest schools, which I invariably find are the best. The people here are generally wealthy, and employ teachers of the most experience and best reputation, paying wages ranging from eight to twenty dollars per week. The schools that I class as No. 2 are those lying in the central part of my commissioner district. Here we have a section not as fertile and productive as the western, and more sparsely populated; the schools are not as large, the people not so able to bear the burden of taxation, consequently a little more on the cheap order as to employing teachers; wages ranging from five to ten dollars per week. Schools No. 3 are those lying in the eastern part, in towns bordering on the State line. The land in part of this section is cold and barren, and mostly used for grazing purposes. Districts here embrace a large tract of territory, yet the schools are small, school-houses poor, corresponding with the huts of the settlers scattered here and there on the sides of the mountains. Wages ranging from two to eight dollars per week. (P. 312.)

Commissioner McIntosh, of Delaware county:

The success of a school depends, in a great measure, on the trustee. Many districts do not properly consider this matter at their annual meetings, but elect to that important office any one who is willing to accept." (P. 315.)

Commissioner Whiting, of Erie county.

It seems that many of the trustees do not manifest the same zeal in employing teachers that they do in employing mechanics and other workmen. If they employ a mechanic, they invariably get a good one, one they know personally or by reputation that does his work well, and they are willing to pay

good fair wages. But when they hire a school teacher, they look to the price first, and not enough to the workmanship, and very few even go in to see how the teacher progresses, or how their children get along, and then wonder why the children do not progress faster. (Pp. 320-1.)

Commissioner Heald, of Essex county.

The inhabitants of school districts, in many cases, act unwisely by electing to office a trustee or trustees, who have little, if any, interest in the schools. About half of the school houses are very good and the other half very bad and not really fit to be called school buildings. (Pp. 323-4.)

Commissioner Dewey, of Franklin county.

While we feel a satisfaction in view of the manifest increased interest in educational matters, and turn with pride to the commodious school buildings that reflect credit on the district, and speak well of the liberality and wisdom of their builders, there are many others in a dilapidated condition. This I attribute largely to the custom of districts annually changing their trustees, thus keeping in office a succession of new men who have bestowed little thought upon the matter of schools or their wants; whose chief aim is to get through the year with as little expense as possible. They are elected in the Fall, and being unaccustomed to look after any matters except their own, in preparing for a long cold winter, the comforts of the school room are neglected or forgotten until winter closes in, the school house unbanked, and the cold forbidding any outside repairs. From ten to fifty per cent of the children, after trying the experiment of alternately freezing and roasting, become either sick or disgusted, and are allowed to stay at home the rest of the winter. The district thus loses a portion of its public money, pays more for fuel, impairs the health of its children, besides allowing them to grow up in idleness and ignorance, all to save five or ten dollars expense in the Fall. (P. 326.)

Commissioner Bouton, of Green county.

Whenever the office of trustee is abolished, our schools, undoubtedly, will improve very much. Probably in every school district in this State there are more or less families—generally the wealthiest—who have no children to send to school, and as they are taxed to aid in educating the rising generation, they will contrive every available means to secure a cheap school by giving incompetent teachers. This class is generally influential, and can control the election of trustees. Trustees are often elected that can neither read nor write; consequently are wholly dependent upon the accuracy and honesty of others for the transaction of all business devolving upon them. In my judgment, a town board of education would be far better.

Out of the eighty-six reports received by me, I think there were about fifteen that had the appearance of being correct. After having returned a certain report a second time, the trustee brought it to me and says: "What is wrong about this report?" Said I: "You say in your report that you have received \$284 and have paid out \$434; is that true?" "No; that is not so." He took the report, went away a short time and returned it correctly balanced. (?)

Another reported fifty-one pupils in the district, with an average attendance of about seven hundred. I mention these as specimens of the reports in Greene county, and I presume they compare favorably with reports generally. I know of an instance in Greene county where a trustee neglected to report to the commissioner, and, to avoid the trouble of going to the district, and, being generous hearted, the commissioner made the report for the district, and the money, of course, was apportioned in the same manner as if the trustee had done his duty. How accurate! Some trustees utterly refuse to answer some of the questions found in their reports. The whole matter rests with the trustees. It is often urged that such a teacher is good enough—our school is small, our school is backward, our school is all small scholars, this girl is poor, that one has no friends, etc., etc. My answer, generally, has been, that if the school be backward so much more the necessity for a good teacher; that one pupil needs just as good a teacher as fifty; that if a girl be poor and no friends, to take out your pocket books and make her a donation and not sacrifice the interests of the rising generation for the benefit of a few that do not want to labor but "keep school." It is often arranged between parents who have teachers in their respective families and living in separate districts to reciprocate

cate favors. You take trustee and so will I; then you hire my son or daughter, as the case may be, and I will hire you. Almost invariably, every man who accepts the office of trustee has some friend of his or that of his neighbor whom he intends to hire regardless of the requisite qualifications. In my judgment some legislation is necessary respecting the office of trustee. I have known of four girls, from eleven to thirteen years of age, being licensed in the village of Prattsville, to teach. Those girls were fortunate, as they had influential, political fathers. The result of such licensing is, that there were about four teachers to a school, on an average, throughout the county, and that experienced teachers would not engage for the prices given to the inexperienced, and that the schools have not been advanced, to say nothing of their degenerating. About one half of the school houses in my district are fit for school purposes, while the other half are a disgrace to an enlightened community. There are school houses in which is not found a black-board, a dictionary, a globe, nor any maps, with pupils sitting on slabs for benches, with the legs protruding, and feet of pupils hanging six inches from the floor. There is, however, one benefit to be derived, and that is a practical knowledge of the zones; near the stove the torrid zone, half way back the temperate zone, while on the back seat is found the frigid zone. (Pp. 331, 2, 3, 4.)

Commissioner Holcomb, of Herkimer county.

No subject within the interest of common school education affords a source of such humiliating reflections as that of the condition of a large number of the school houses in this commissioner district. About one half of them are in good repair, having comfortable and convenient internal arrangements, and provided with maps, black-boards, and other necessary apparatus. Four-fifths of the other half are barely sufficient for the convenience and accommodation of the teachers and pupils, while what remains are to all intents and purposes not fit to be the habitation of an Esquimaux. It is hardly possible to speak of this latter class in terms of civility. One instance illustrative of what is here stated is now fresh in my memory: In one of my three visitations during last winter, I called at a school house having four windows and one door. On entering it I found it ventilated in every part, its walls affording no security against the winds and the storms. The windows were partly filled with glass, and partly by the hats, caps, and other loose garments of the school children, and judging from the appearance of the old broken stove, one would suppose that it had been condemned for all other purposes except that of the school-room. In order to keep the door closed against the wind, it was necessary to place a stick of wood against it, and to be tended by a boy, when the scholars should come in or go out. Here in this building I found twenty children assembled with their teacher on a cold winter's day. The chief occupation of the scholars was travelling from their seats to the stove and *vice versa*, while four-fifths of them kept up a continual coughing. The teacher apologized by saying that in cold, windy weather, he could not do much till the fire would get a going which usually took till the afternoon, he having nothing but green beech and birch wood to burn. It was an excellent place to illustrate one of the principles in geography—to show the temperature of different latitudes, for five steps would carry a person through the five zones. In going into the school my first business is to observe the teacher's manner of teaching and governing his school, and I have found it to be, in very many instances, nearly like the following: The classes are called on in numerical order, and while a class is reading, frequently little attention is paid to it, except to assist occasionally in pronouncing some of the more difficult words in the lesson. No explanations being given by the teacher, nor a single sentence being read by himself as an example for the class—his attention being frequently called to attend to other business—he would scarcely be able at the close of the lesson to tell the subject about which the class had been reading. I have some times been both pained and amused at the vacant stare and insane features of both teacher and pupils, when I have called upon the class to give the meaning of some simple word in the lesson, or to tell the subject about which they had been reading.

These were subjects to which their attention had never been directed, and when I have endeavored to urge upon the teachers the importance of this matter, and have asked them to define some word that their pupils could not tell the meaning of, while some would frankly own that they did not know,

others would mask their ignorance behind a sort of none-of-your-business frown.

There are, perhaps, no duties connected with the interest of the schools of more importance than those resting upon trustees.

I am constrained to say that too large a number of these officers are wholly incompetent, and unworthy to hold a trust so responsible. To elect men so incompetent to fill stations so important is not only abusing the elective franchise, but it is abusing the children, abusing the parents, and, with high-handed injustice, it is abusing the munificence of the State. In direct violation of law, they engage as teachers individuals without certificates, and whose qualifications would never entitle them to one, the only qualification asked for being, "Will you keep cheap?" (Pp. 337-9, 342.)

Commissioner Hamilton, of Kings county :

In my last annual report to the Department, I recommended that the present district system should be abolished. I am now more fully persuaded of the importance of such a change, believing that the town should maintain and have control of the schools within its limits. I claim the following as benefits to be derived from such a change :

1. It would settle the difficulty of fixing district boundaries, which I find to be the source of considerable trouble and no little dissatisfaction.
2. It would enable towns to establish schools of a higher grade, which to my mind, is a consideration of some importance.
3. It would admit allowing the school tax to be levied and collected at the same time and in the same manner as other taxes in the town are collected.
4. It would admit of the adopting of a town uniformity of text-books—a very important consideration.

Other benefits to be derived from such a change might be mentioned, but I deem the above sufficient to give importance to the recommendation. (P. 352.)

Commissioner Browning, of Niagara county :

Trustees, as a rule, are dilatory in sending their annual reports, and, when received, are full of errors. Out of ninety-six reports received from trustees out very few were entirely correct. (P. 366.)

Commissioner Chapin, of Ontario county :

The evil now existing is that, in districts of small assessable property and wealth, the trustees from various motives—of economy or, perhaps, parsimony—refuse to lay sufficient tax to maintain a good teacher or teachers in their schools, but are content with a poor teacher, or at least with only such a teacher as can be secured at the lowest salary, while, in large and wealthier districts, the necessary tax to maintain first-class teachers is more cheerfully and more easily borne, and the pupils of such districts enjoy all the advantages of the best instruction by the very best teachers. This inequality in advantages for instruction in the different schools should, if possible, be at once corrected. (P. 370.)

Commissioner Beals, of Otsego county :

Districts should be careful to place competent men in the position of trustees; it would be a saving in the end. Trustees and patrons, too, are often of the opinion that *their* "school is so backward that almost any one can teach it;" and so, of course, they hire a third-class, "cheap teacher," who, too often, proves to be the dearest, and the result sometimes is that, through parents and teachers combined, the children grow up to be third-class citizens. (P. 383.)

Commissioner Reed, of Putnam county :

Some districts are entirely without school apparatus—not having even a black-board; and there are few that have anything like what should be in the smallest district. There is a great difference of opinion, in nearly all districts, in regard to the grade of school required, or at least in regard to the amount of wages they should pay, consequently with every change of trustee there is likely to be a change of teacher. A few districts, covering a large extent, are so thinly settled that the schools are quite small, and the people are so poor that it would take from three to four per cent. of the assessed valuation to support a respectable school for forty weeks. They employ the cheapest teacher they can find, who can get even a third-grade certificate, and have

school only twenty-eight weeks. I think the present system of districts and trustees should be abolished, and all the schools of a town be placed under a town board. (Pp. 386-7.)

Commissioner Brownlee, of Richmond county :

A project has been advanced to arrange all the schools of any one town under one management, doing away with district boundaries (a constant source of trouble,) and equalizing the school-tax over the whole town. In my judgment this is very desirable. There are small districts in this county which have to raise from five to ten times as much school tax as some others, in order to have a reasonably good teacher. Some such plan would be a grand supplementing of the free school law. (P. 392.)

Commissioner Goodale, of St. Lawrence county:

We have a class of trustees who know little or nothing about a school, or what it ought to be, and cannot make out a district report. Of the whole number of reports in my district, only one was correct in all respects, and two more nearly so, while many were so imperfect and incorrect that I had to make them over as best I could, sending some back for correction, when they were so far incorrect that I could make nothing of them. If our districts would put the best men into office, instead of those who will spend the least money, it would be a great help to our schools. (P. 393.)

Commissioner Roe, of Saratoga county:

The great fault of which I would complain, if I complain at all, is that trustees are elected in very many instances, with this one object in view, viz: *a cheap school*. Setting aside the interests of the children, and looking only to the interests of the tax-payers. Asking the teachers two questions: First, have you a license?—not inquiring respecting grade of license, experience or past reputation. Second, *how cheap will you teach?* (P. 395.)

Commissioner Shurter, of Saratoga county:

Each year a party who desire a good teacher and school, and are willing to pay a reasonable price for the same, and another party who want the very cheapest, meet in the annual meeting, and have a contest—some times with hard words, illegal voting, blows, etc. One year one party is victorious, and the next year the other party, thereby making a radical change in the kind of instruction given from year to year. (P. 399.)

Commissioner Benjamin, of Suffolk county:

The majority of trustees' reports received by me, during the past seven years, have abounded in such palpable blunders and errors as to destroy nearly all confidence in any of the statements contained in them. I believe the efficiency of our common school system might be greatly improved by intrusting the immediate supervision of our schools to more intelligent and responsible agents. (P. 401.)

Commissioner Holden, of Ulster county :

In a majority of districts electing but one trustee, teachers have been changed since the first of October. (P. 410.)

Commissioner Brower, of Westchester county:

I refer to those clever young Misses, just out of school, whose friends intercede with the trustees to allow them an opportunity to "keep" their district schools just for the summer perhaps. As they can "board at home," their services can be obtained for a trifle, and the economical official is some times induced to yield to friendly solicitations, and the farce of "keeping school" is again enacted to the disgust of the more intelligent and sensible portion of the community. While it affords me great pleasure to state that many of the trustees are very prompt and efficient in the discharge of their duties, I am constrained to add that not a few are wholly unable or unwilling to properly fill this responsible position. Teachers are sometimes employed by them with little or no reference to their qualifications, and allowed to commence teaching without a certificate and are as readily dismissed for the most trivial and ridiculous cause. (P. 422-5.)

Commissioner Wright, of Westchester county:

Among the objects of my severe condemnation, I number the school trustees. Of course, there are honorable exceptions, but they are but the necessary proofs of the existing rule. Many persons seem to consider the office of school trustee about equivalent to that of pound master, minus the responsibility and compensation attached to the latter position. So long as a *pen* is provided, in which to gather, five days in the week, his own and the children of the public, he considers his official duties well and truly performed. No conveniences are arranged for the comfort of the children; no provision is made for their mental advancement—a mere building—and even *that* one necessity as cheaply constructed as possible, in many instances allowed to fall to pieces a clapboard at a time; standing on the verge of the highway in order that not a single foot of arable land may be incumbered with it, the interior of which possesses no attractions (unless provided through the personal exertions and private purse of the teacher,) to invite the attendance of the boys and girls of the neighborhood. Not a sign of any apparatus by which the lessons are made easily understood, and lasting in such understanding, in some cases not even a piece of chalk to place a problem on the roughly painted black-board. (P.427.)

I have quoted from but one Report, and that the last one issued. Surely I need not multiply this evidence. I will not even quote the careful testimony of Commissioner Taylor, of Sullivan county, which was given in the SCHOOL BULLETIN for January, 1876. The witnesses I have summoned are competent; their testimony is conclusive.

I assume, then, that two facts have been proved :

- (1) That our district schools have no effective supervision.
- (2) That they need it

It remains for us to consider how they shall receive it.

I know of but two plans which have been proposed ; one is the payment of district trustees for their services ; the other is the adoption of the Township System.

After devoting two sessions to the discussion of this matter, the Chemung County Teachers' Association, one week ago last Saturday, passed resolutions in which the remedy proposed is stated in the following paragraph :

These trustees be paid for the time actually employed, and be compelled to visit the school at least once a month.

Substantially this plan is recommended in the last Superintendent's Report by Commissioners Bush, Barber, Heald and Holcomb. On the other hand, a fatal objection to this project is clearly expressed by Commissioner Brownlee, whose continuous term of office has been double that of any of his associates. He says :

Some suggestions have been made to attach some compensation to the office of trustee. This, it seems to me, would be very unfortunate. No compensation likely to be obtained from the district would be sufficient to induce the right man to accept the office, if not already so inclined ; and a small pittance of remuneration would induce some to accept the office whose presence in it would be the reverse of desirable. (Pp. 389, 390.)

In 1869, the Pennsylvania Convention of County Superintendents voted, 46 to 8, that the school-district directors ought to be paid for their services. Referring to this action, State Superintendent Wickersham says :

I am compelled to think that such a change would damage the system.

- (1) Because the cost of such a directory would be a heavy burden.
- (2) Because in the course of years it would add little or nothing to the income of any director.

(3) Because it would tend to degrade the office. Badly qualified as many directors now are, this change would tend to introduce into boards of school directors large numbers of the lowest grade of office-seekers, and to drive out of them hundreds of men who have given their time freely to promote the good of the schools. There are to-day serving in the several school-boards throughout the commonwealth, large numbers of gentlemen who have held high office in the State, retired business men, clergymen, lawyers, doctors, prominent merchants, high-toned farmers and mechanics, who would scorn to receive a little pittance for their services, but who will gladly render them gratuitously in the hope of promoting the public good. The services rendered to our schools by this class of citizens can not be spared. (*Report, 1869, pp. XV, XVI.*)

A practical illustration will show the justice of this reasoning. I know of one district-officer in this State who receives a salary. At its last annual meeting, the village of Kingsboro, Fulton county, voted to pay the district clerk for his services during the current year, the sum of five dollars.

Now the duties of a district clerk cover two pages of the Code of Public Instruction, (see pp. 129, 130,) involving ten specifications, and enforced by two penalties, one of five dollars and one of fifty dollars.

Certainly these provisions imply considerable responsibility and a great deal of work. I can understand how a man may undertake this responsibility and this labor because he feels it to be his duty to the district, or because he covets the small honor which attaches to a public office, or because he is fond of exercising his penmanship upon permanent records, or because he has little else to do and wants something to occupy his time; or I can understand how a man may undertake this responsibility and this labor for a reasonable compensation, say fifty dollars or even twenty dollars a year, for the sake of the money. But that a man who would not otherwise undertake this responsibility and this labor, would undertake it for five dollars, or that a man who would otherwise do the work imperfectly would do it as well as he could for five dollars, would imply that he rated his services too low to be a competent district officer.

Still more forcibly does this reasoning apply to the far more responsible and laborious office of school-trustee.

But we may go further than this. Suppose it were practicable to expend in this way one-sixth of our entire State school-tax and give to trustees a salary of say twenty dollars a year, and suppose that this salary would command the zealous efforts of the three best men in every district of the State: it remains true that these three best men would not, in most cases, be good enough to secure effective supervision.

What are the duties of a school trustee?

His chief clerical labor is the making of his annual report, thirty-three items of which are specified in the Code, some of them embodying elaborate computations. As has been already testified by Commissioners, these reports are now nearly valueless, because of their glaring inaccuracies. But the inaccuracies so easily detected are the mere arithmetical mistakes in arranging and adding columns. The Commissioner has no check upon the inaccuracy of the original statistics, which may have been, and usually are, the merest guesses. To make a thoroughly accurate and complete report is work for a mind trained to careful

judgment, exact thinking and clerical habits. Seventy-five, or twenty-five, such men in every township are not to be found, even for twenty dollars a year.

Again, the trustee is the executive officer of the district. He is to call special meetings whenever he deems it proper; to divide and assign the public moneys; to make out the tax-list; to purchase, lease or build, furnish, insure, keep in repair and have charge of the school-house, with power to permit its use for other than school purposes.

All this requires an exact, far-sighted, first-class business man. Are there seventy-five such men in every town in this State, holding back from the office of school-trustee until they can get with it a salary of twenty dollars a year?

But all these duties are trifling, compared with the main responsibility of the trustee: the fixing of the course of study, the hiring of teachers, and the supervision of the school. In practice, the first and last of these duties are ignored; the course of study is left to the teacher, and the teacher is left to himself. But the law puts the course of study into the hands of the trustee, as of course it should: for who would have not only classification and methods but the very selection of subjects in which instruction shall be given, left to the capricious will of inexperienced and constantly shifting teachers? Can three men intelligent enough to fix a course of study for their schools be hired in every district in this State, even for twenty dollars a year?

The trustee is to select and hire teachers. You, gentlemen, who have made education a study, and who have examined hundreds of candidates for licenses, know how difficult it is to predict who will be successful teachers. You know how little is implied in the grade of the certificate, and of what slight value are recommendations. Can three men be found in every district in this State, capable to judge what kind of a teacher their school needs, and whether an applicant is that kind of a teacher? capable to estimate his literary, moral, social qualifications? large minded enough to judge him by what he is and not for how little he will teach for?

The trustee is to supervise the school. He is to visit it frequently; to commend, counsel, remonstrate; to see that the course of study is faithfully carried out by intelligent methods, that the discipline is healthy, that the moral tone of the school is pure and elevating. Can the 11,000 districts of this State furnish thirty thousand men fit for this responsibility, even at a salary of twenty dollars a year?

To any man possessing a just conception of all that these questions imply, they carry their own answer. This State can not, no State in this Union can, even for twenty dollars a year, furnish three such men or one such man to every four square miles.

Even if the State were willing to undergo this expense, therefore,—an expense nearly double the combined amounts which are paid to School Commissioners and to State Normal Schools, it is a fact that paid trustees would not give our district schools effective supervision, first, because a sufficient number of qualified men can not be found, and, second, because even if they could be

found, they are not the kind of men who would be attracted to the office by the twenty dollars a year.

Hence we are driven to the other of the two plans proposed: the adoption of the Township System.

What is the Township System? Its leading features as adopted by other States are mainly as follows:

The Township System abolishes District boundaries. The school property now owned by each District will become the property of the Town, of course by appraisal and assessment. The present annual District meetings will be merged in the Annual Town Meeting. In place of the Trustees, Clerk, Collector and Librarian, elected in each district, there will be a Town Board of Education and other needed officers elected at Town Meeting. To this Board of Education will be intrusted the care of all the school property in the Town, the hiring of all the teachers in the Town, and the general charge of all the schools of the Town. Whatever local tax may be voted for the support of the schools will be raised by a Town tax, without regard to former District boundaries. All public schools, of whatever grade, will be free to all inhabitants of the Town, of legal school age. In other words, the unit of our School System, as of our Municipal System, will be the Town, instead of the District.

As we are dealing not with theory but with facts, and as the facts I shall lay before you will put in clear light the benefits we may hope to reap from the adoption of this system, I shall proceed at once to sketch the experience of those States which have adopted it.

In our own State, it has received fair trial in at least two instances. The following statement was made in 1876 by the principal of the school:

The Union Free School of Clarence was organized in the fall of 1869.

It is composed of seven common school districts, situated in an agricultural district having but one small village, the village of Clarence, within its limits. Although the district is in three different towns, its area is about that of an ordinary township; therefore it affords a fair test of the township system of schools.

The primary departments are taught in the houses formerly used by the district schools, while the higher grades are gathered into the building, centrally located at Clarence. The two departments in this building employ the services of three teachers, who with the seven primary teachers make up a corps of ten.

The school is greatly indebted to Jared Parker, M. D. for generous contributions to its laboratory and library, as well as for the greater gift towards a permanent endowment fund. In 1872 Dr. Parker offered to give \$15,000, provided an equal amount was raised by taxation upon the district. The proposition was accepted and the fund is being collected in ten equal instalments. It is expected that this fund, producing a yearly income of \$2,100, will when paid up be sufficient to support the schools without taxation.

It should be stated however, that this endowment does not at the present time lessen the taxation, as the annual instalment of \$1,500, together with the interest on the unpaid part of the fund, brings the rate of tax even higher than it would be without the endowment.

The success of the system has been such as to quiet all opposition, although both the organization and the endowment scheme were opposed by a large minority. It is found that the average cost of teachers' wages in the Union District is slightly above that of ordinary country schools, but less than the price paid by neighboring village schools. In the town of Cheektowaga, which the Commissioner informs me has the best schools of any town in his district, the average of teachers' wages is \$316.58, per year; while the Union District pays \$376.21, a difference of \$59.63 against the latter. I regard this difference as more than counterbalanced by the experience and superior qualifications of our teachers, three of whom hold Normal School diplomas, and five others are graduates of the academic department of the Union School.

The following figures taken from the trustees' reports to the Commissioner exhibit some of the results of the township system.

	CHEEKTOWAGA.	CLARENCE.
No. of school children.....	1059	495
No. who attend school some portion of the year.	535	403
Per cent. of the number registered upon the number of school age.....	51	81
Average daily attendance.....	214.56	205.85
Per cent. of daily attendance upon the No. of school age.....	20	42
Rate of school tax.....	3½ mills	3¼ mills.

Cheektowaga contains no villages and therefore has no expensive schools to support; yet the rate of taxation is one fourth of a mill greater. A greater income to the Union District from the State causes this difference.

Thus the people of Clarence provide the advantages of a high school at a lower rate of taxation than that paid to support district schools.

Finally, Cheektowaga with more than twice as many children of school age barely shows a greater average attendance than Clarence. This is owing to the fact that we hold our pupils in the Academic Department several years after they would have left the district school altogether.

Children of sixteen years have outgrown, or think they have outgrown the common school of the present day. But few above that age can be found in the schools. Probably every town contains one hundred such youth, ten of whom, it may be, seek higher training in some distant academy, while the remaining moiety gain no more than the rudiments of an education. This is the very class we reach with our school. At the present time there are one hundred and twenty-five pupils enrolled in the Academic Department, eighty-five of whom are residents of the district.

The average age of these pupils is seventeen years. Not more than one-fourth of this number could afford to pay in some distant town or city for the higher culture they now receive at home. During the past six years we have taught scores of youth who would never have attended any other school, but who are now successful teachers, clerks or students in the professions.

The success of our township system commands the admiration of our neighbors, while it is justly the pride of our citizens. A marked effect of the organization is noticed in the advance in the value of real estate of twenty-five per cent. above the prices of five years ago even in the remote parts of the district, while fifty per cent. is a low estimate for the advance in the more central portions. This may be owing in part to the attractions of the endowment, but as there yet remain seven payments to be raised by tax upon the district, it is probably secondary to the school itself in producing this result. (*School Bulletin*, Vol. I, p. 71.)

In somewhat similar manner, ten of the districts of the town of Black Brook, Clinton county, have consolidated themselves into a single district, under three trustees, with similar happy results, for the details of which I refer those interested to the School Commissioner of that district, Mr. John B. Riley, Plattsburgh.

Looking outside the State, we find ourselves alone in our previous inaction upon this subject. As this is a fact not commonly known, I shall ask you to follow me in a hasty survey of the township System in other States. For convenience, we will take them up in the usual geographical order.

Maine has for many years encouraged the adoption of the Township System, under a law permitting any town to abolish school-districts, take possession of the school-property, levy a tax upon the town equal to the appraised value, and remit such value to the tax payers of each district. The State Superintendent says:

I have failed to find in any school report for years any advocacy of the district plan; in fact, school-officers have generally condemned it. Our people are rapidly coming to a judicious conclusion in this matter, so that we do not seem

to need any further legislation compelling complete abolition of the district system. Every year witnesses more or less towns adopting the town plan. (*Report*, 1874 p. 121.)

In *New Hampshire*, the district system was established in 1843. "From that act," says Superintendent Simonds, in 1876, "may be dated the 'beginning of numberless woes' to our schools." (*Report*, 1876, p. 367.) In 1870, an act was passed permitting towns to abolish district boundaries. The Superintendent says, in 1875 :

This act has been adopted in several towns of this State, and been in operation three and four years, where the people are satisfied with its working. In answer to a circular of inquiry addressed to the superintending school-committee of the several towns of the State in 1873, eighty per cent. of the answers approved of the provisions of the act, and advised its adoption. (*Report*, 1875, p. 283.)

Vermont passed a similar law in 1870. Superintendent Conant says, in 1876 :

The best remedy yet found for the inequality so common under our district arrangement is the town system of schools. That system is now in operation in the following towns: Brighton, Burlington, Glastenbury, Hinesburgh, Middletown, Waitsfield, Woodford. The advantages of the town system, which have been presented in previous reports, can now be set forth by the Superintendents of the towns where the system is in use. (*Report*, 1876, pp. 39, 40.)

Massachusetts adopted the district system in 1789. Said Horace Mann :

I consider the law of 1789, authorizing towns to divide themselves into districts the most unfortunate law on the subject of common schools ever enacted in this State.

Said Secretary Joseph White, in 1870 :

For thirty years, at least, the leading writers and speakers had regarded the so-called district system as an unfortunate interpolation into the Public School System of the State, and had earnestly pleaded for its eradication. Every Secretary, every Agent, and, so far as I am informed, every member of the Board of Education, whatever might have been their views before entering upon their special work, speedily became convinced that the system was an obstacle in the pathway of improvement, and strongly advocated its removal. Gradually but surely the opinions thus formed and expressed gained possession of the public, till an overwhelming majority of the people had voluntarily adopted the district system, and very few remained to advocate its continuance. By a provision of the General Statutes, the towns in which the "district system" still continued were required to vote at their annual meeting in 1869 directly upon the question of its abolishment. Moreover, by one of the provisions of an act passed in 1866, its distributive share of the annual income of the school fund would be withheld from any town which refused to abolish the system at that time. (At this juncture an order compelling the entire abolition of the district system passed the House with only nine votes in the negative, and afterwards the Senate without a dissenting voice.) Thus by one wise and beneficent act, was removed from our school system that which had for years been regarded by the great body of intelligent observers and laborers as more than all things else standing in the pathway of progress. It was indeed a stumbling-block and an offence. (33d *Report*, pp. 113, 114, 120.)

In *Rhode Island*, the district system has been condemned but not yet abolished. The Superintendent says, in 1877 :

The proposed act enabling towns to abolish the district system, which was introduced into the Assembly last year, I most certainly trust will be passed this winter in some form. My additional experience of another year in the adjustment of many difficulties, my intercourse with men of the best judgment and the most interest in and knowledge of school affairs throughout the State, and the concurrent testimony of school officers throughout the country, all unite in convincing me that we should take immediate measures towards removing this hindrance to our advance. (*Report*, 1877, pp. 120, 121.)

In 1865, *Connecticut* authorized towns to consolidate all their districts, provided a majority of the districts consented. In 1866, she removed this condition, and the Township System has been adopted in several towns. In 1875 the State Secretary gives the results of the working of the system in Stamford, and says :

The division of many of our towns into small independent districts seems inexplicable to educators abroad, and so it surely will seem to the next generation in America. The system is doomed. (*Report*, 1875, p. 112.)

Pennsylvania adopted the Township System in 1854. Each township, borough and city constitutes a district. A board of directors, usually six in number, is elected by the people once in three years. To this system must be largely attributed the enormous advance of this State during the past twenty years, which was so admirably set forth at the Centennial.

Ohio generally retains the district system, but a law has been passed permitting towns to consolidate their districts. The State Commissioner says :

The schools in the township districts have not kept pace, in improvement, with those of the towns and cities. Their organization is different, their affairs are administered in a different way, and there has been in their conduct a total absence of thorough, competent supervision. The remedy is to be found in the adoption of the township system of school administration. (*Report*, 1874, pp. 45, 46.)

Indiana adopted the Township System in 1852. Though the towns are divided into districts, and the districts elect officers known as directors, these directors have power only to preside at school-meetings take charge of the district property, and perform other duties under the direction of the trustees. The township trustees have charge of the schools, employ teachers, erect building, provide furniture, apparatus, etc., and exercise general supervision.

Illinois has, like *Indiana*, township boards of trustees, but still leaves the management of the schools to the district directors. Superintendent Bateman said, in 1874:

The most serious drawback to the realization of the best results from our system of common schools—next to the want of a supply of competent teachers (a want which results from the want of a demand for them, owing to imperfect supervision)—is believed to be our plan of small, independent sub-districts. This feature of our system is cumbrous, unwieldy, expensive, inefficient, vexatious in details and unsatisfactory in results. Is there a remedy? I think there is, and one that is simple, practicable obvious and effectual. It is simply to abolish all independent local districts, erect each congressional township into a school district, and let one board administer the school affairs of the whole township. The effect would be to dispense with thirty thousand school-officers, to reduce the number of school districts from 32,000 to 2,000, to reduce the number of school elections in the same proportion; to stop forever disputes as to district boundaries; to leave the board free to send each child to the school most convenient and suitable to its age and attainments; to make one uniform rate of school tax for the whole township; to greatly reduce the aggregate expense of common schools; to improve the condition and equipment of school-houses; to promote uniformity of books, methods of teaching and courses of study; to enable every district to establish a good system of graded schools; to secure better teachers, with greater permanency, and impart to the whole system more compactness, unity, strength, vigor and efficiency. (*Report*, 1873, 4, pp. 15, 68.)

In 1857, *Iowa* adopted the Township System, reducing the number of districts from 3,265 to less than 900. Unfortunately cities and un-incorporated

towns and villages of not less than 200 inhabitants were by subsequent acts permitted to constitute sub districts, of which there are now more than 1000. But in general, the Superintendent says :

It is now nearly ten years since the law of our State first provided that each civil township should constitute a school district and have its educational affairs managed by one board of directors. This feature at the time of its introduction was a great innovation on the previous system, in which each sub-district was an independent district, managing its affairs without suggestion or interference from others. As was to be expected, such a radical change excited opposition; but as the benefits of the township district system became more apparent and its workings better understood, this opposition gradually subsided, and it is now acquiesced in and approved as one eminently suited to the necessities of our State. (*Report, 1866,7, pp. 21, 22.*)

I need not trespass further upon your patience with these illustrations. We find in all the States which have been subject to the district system the same inefficiency which characterizes our own country's schools; we find that in all of them only one remedy for this inefficiency has been devised; we find that wherever this remedy has been applied, it has been effective and satisfactory, as it also proves in the two towns in this State which have adopted it. Facts can go no further. Our schools have no efficient supervision; they imperatively need it; the Township System, and that only, will provide it. The argument is complete; we need the Township System.

To convert the popular mind to this reform, however, we must be ready to answer two objections; first, that it will impose additional taxation upon the wealthy districts; second, that it will infringe upon the democratic rights of the school-districts. I believe no other objections than these have ever been urged, except those which came from ignorance of what this Township System really is. These two, however, will be frequently met and should be patiently and conclusively answered.

To the first objection reply may be made that at any rate the wealthy districts, and other districts too, will have the satisfaction of knowing that their money is economically expended.

A year or two ago, I sat with Principal Milne, of the Geneseo Normal School, upon the piazza of the Sans Souci Hotel, at Ballston Spa. Presently State Superintendent Gilmore approached, and asked if he should interrupt a private conversation.

"Not in the least," said Mr. Milne. "We were just agreeing that of every dollar that this State expends for public education, seventy-five cents is wasted."

"And why?" asked Mr. Gilmour.

"Because we have not learned to conduct our educational affairs upon a business basis."

"Precisely what I said before the National Association at Baltimore," returned Mr. Gilmour. "When I have hired a man to chop wood and he comes for his pay, the question I ask him is whether he has done the work. But when the teacher calls for his month's salary, and is asked whether he has put his scholars a month ahead in scholarship, mental growth and general culture,

all he can say is that he holds a certificate and has spent six hours a day in the school-room." (See *School Bulletin*, January, 1877.)

But not only is it impossible, through lack of efficient supervision, to determine the quality of instruction for which teachers' wages are paid, but the material property of the district is grossly wasted. More than ten millions of dollars is invested in the school-houses and sites of our country schools, which are, as we have shown, under no effective supervision. The consequence is that the stitch in time is not taken, and these buildings are almost universally out of repair. Two years ago, Miss Carrie Bassett was teaching a district school in Gowanda. One day she stepped upon a defective board in the school house floor. It threw her and dislocated a knee-pan. She sued the district for damages. In the County Court, she was awarded \$3500 and costs. The district appeals to the Supreme Court and then to the Court of Appeals. The decision was affirmed and the expense of the suit to the district exceeds \$6,000. A system of effective supervision would have repaired that floor and saved the district that money. How many school houses are to-day unfit for occupancy, useless for the purpose designed, and therefore an utter waste of the money of the district, only because they were not properly built or have not been kept in repair, because no competent person made it his business to look after them!

But it is in the furniture and apparatus of the school-room that this wastefulness is most appalling. Teachers frequently complain because the district will not purchase the needed globe and maps and dictionary, and attribute the refusal to penuriousness. Seldom, I believe, is this the real cause. There are few districts in this State which have not, under the inspiration of an energetic and successful teacher, provided liberally for school room apparatus. While the energetic and successful teacher remained, the apparatus was in daily use and under excellent care. But this teacher was soon succeeded, under our system of hiring, by another who knew little of such appliances and cared nothing for them. No system of supervision held this teacher responsible for the apparatus, and he let it lie neglected, to be used only as playthings for mischievous boys. The district contributed freely to purchase it; but when they saw how it was used, they felt themselves imposed upon, and resolved never again to be deluded into purchasing more than the barest necessities.

How signally is this shown in the history of our district libraries. For forty years, an annual appropriation of \$55,000 has been made by the State for the purchase of books; in the aggregate, two and one-fifth millions of dollars. Under effective supervision, these libraries would have steadily increased in size and usefulness. But what are the facts. During the last twenty-five years, during which nearly fourteen hundred thousand dollars has been appropriated for books, their number has diminished from 1,604,210 to 765,546, and the annual decrease continues. The wealthier districts might well afford to pay a larger proportion of the tax of the town, if they could be assured of a supervision which would substitute economy in expenditure and vigilance in oversight for this unbridled extravagance and wastefulness.

Again, the school-district is an anomaly in our municipal system. We have but one other division of the town; that into road districts. Here the obvious reason for the division is the fact that the tax is paid by labor, necessarily under direction of a local pathmaster. Even here, the supervision of the pathmasters is supplemented by that of highway commissioners for the town; and yet I am told the system is far from satisfactory.

A similar reason once existed for a division into school-districts. The local tax was by rate-bill, levied upon each parent in proportion to the number of days his children attended school. There was a further provision for exempting from this rate-bill those who were too poor to pay it. Since 1867, the rate-bill has been unknown and this reason no longer exists.

On the other hand, much manifest injustice arises from levying all other taxes upon the town, but the school-tax only upon the school-district. Thus most of the towns through which the newer railroads pass were bonded for building them. Stockbridge, for instance, with a valuation of \$358,480 has a railroad indebtedness of \$143,000, or 40 per cent. of its entire valuation; Delhi is bonded \$245,800 upon a valuation of \$706,989, or 35 per cent; Wawarsing is bonded \$259,000 upon a valuation of \$841,415, or 30 per cent: and so on. (State-census, 1875, pp. 449, 453, 461.) The taxes to pay this indebtedness are all levied upon the property of the towns; yet the school-tax upon the property of the railroads all goes to the school-districts through which the railroads pass. (Chap. 694 of the Laws of 1867). In Delhi and Wawarsing, for instance, most of the railroad property is located and taxed for school purposes in the villages of Delhi and Ellenville; yet these villages pay no more in proportion to their property for the bonding of the railroads than the most remote country districts. How great a part of the school-tax is paid by a railroad is well illustrated in Le Roy, where good public schools have been maintained for years without any further school-tax of great amount than that levied upon the railroads passing through the village. Until the unit for school-taxes be made the same as the unit for other taxes, namely the town, injustice of this kind will be every where manifest. To him that hath is given; and from him that hath not is taken away even that which he seemeth to have.

But without dwelling upon these and other minor considerations which might be urged, the statement embodied in the first objection I unhesitatingly admit. The Township System *will* impose additional taxation upon the wealthier districts. Moreover, this additional taxation is absolutely the strongest of all arguments in favor of the Township System. I omitted this argument among the others, because I wished to bring it in here and discuss it fully and finally, by itself. Let us consider, first, the present condition of taxation among the districts. For instance, Commissioner Riley says:

The system of taxation by separate, independent districts, is unequal, and, in the case of weak districts, is frequently burdensome. To illustrate: District No. 3, Schuyler Falls, has an assessed valuation of over \$26,000, while the valuation of District No. 11, of the same town, is less than \$5,000; yet the tax for school purposes in the latter exceeds the former by \$19.22. (*Superintendent's Report*, 1877, p. 308)

Commissioner Van Valkenburgh, as you remember, divides his schools into three classes, according to the wealth of the districts to which the character of the schools corresponds; the wages of teachers varying from two to twenty dollars a week.

Commissioner Reed says:

Almost invariably the poorest districts pay the highest tax, have the poorest schools, and for the shortest time. (Pp. 386, 387.)

Now the first consideration which suggests itself is that a system which permits this inequality is not a system of free schools. If any principle lie at the foundation of the free-school law, it is that every child shall have an equal chance to obtain an education. But if good schools are to be found only in wealthy districts, the country boy's chance to obtain an education will depend upon the value per acre of his father's farm. If he lives where land is high, he will be instructed by a twenty dollar teacher; if he lives where land is cheap, he will recite to the kind of a teacher that can be hired for two dollars a week.

Moreover, this inequality is constantly increasing. From 1865 to 1875, the population of the villages and cities of this State increased 35 per cent, while that of the country increased only 2 percent. In the last five years of the census, 1870 to 1875, the population of Kings county increased 21 per cent, while that of Jefferson, Schuyler, St. Lawrence, Tompkins, Chenango, Sullivan, Delaware, Madison, Cortland, Schoharie and Washington counties decreased, the last nearly three per cent. These figures indicate the concentration both of population and of wealth about the cities and the rail-road villages. As these grow richer, the region about grows poorer and the effort to maintain a respectable school more burdensome.

In another way, this inequality of school privileges tends to perpetuate itself. Already it is a recognized fact that the country schools are inferior, and parents who can afford it send their children to the nearest village. This not only takes away the stimulus in school of some of the brightest scholars, but degrades it in the eyes of those who remain, and precludes any interest in this school on the part of the parents who are thus paying tuition in another. It is plain that unless this tendency can be arrested, our country schools will continue to decline. Here is the weakest spot in our school system. How shall it be strengthened?

Mark well the answer: by returning to that principle of public education from which we have drifted: that *the money of the State shall educate the children of the State.*

On this subject, I can not do better than quote the words of Henry S. Randall, then Secretary of State and Superintendent of Common Schools. Of all men who have held that office, Mr. Randall was perhaps the most discriminating and prudent; his experience had been extensive; his interest in education remained to the day of his death, eighteen months ago. Moreover the words I shall quote were uttered at a time when this very question had been the absorbing topic for five years and had just reached a settlement; at a time, too,

when our present free-school system had just been fairly established, the finishing touches of 1867 being comparatively slight. Surely we can have no higher authority, no more careful judgment, no more favorable opportunity for an opinion upon this question. Let me read from his annual report for 1854 :

Prior to 1849, the proceeds of the School Fund and an equal sum raised by the towns, were ultimately divided among the towns on the basis of population, and among the school districts on the basis of the pupils returned as residing in them. This plan of distribution operated greatly to the advantage of populous and wealthy districts, over those differently situated in those particulars. The expense of a small or a large school of the same grade, does not greatly vary. In thinly populated regions, a district not too large to admit of convenient access to the school house, would necessarily include but a small population, and, consequently, but a small number of scholars; and the same causes which lead to the limitation of population, generally lead to the limitation of wealth. A distribution based on the number of pupils, would give to such a district a comparatively small amount of money; would consequently lead to the imposition of more onerous rate bills and the latter would fall where there was the least ability to pay them. Yet this system was long acquiesced in. Both the law and public sentiment recognized the cost of education as mainly a personal burthen, which every man was required to incur for his own offspring. Following out the same idea, it was not felt that the Legislature had a right to attempt to equalize the burdens of education, as between localities or individuals, by adopting any peculiar system of distributing the public moneys specifically designed to attain that end; but rather that it was bound to give every scholar his pro rata share of those moneys, and leave parents to provide what was further necessary as best they might. A different theory as to where rested the responsibility of educating the people, began to prevail. As ignorance is the parent of crime and civil disorder, it was claimed that a free government was bound to provide for its own stability, and wealth to pay for its own security, by assuming the burthen of popular education. It was insisted that after using the revenues set apart by the government for that purpose, the common schools of the State ought to be supported by a direct tax on property. This principle, to its fullest extent, was engrafted into our laws in 1849. This wholly changed the theory on which a proper distribution of the school moneys rested. If the property of the State is required to support the education of the State, it follows, that the benefit received by it being everywhere the same, its burthens should in like manner be the same. And another important principle came into operation. When the State determined that education should be supported by public contribution, it gave to every citizen a common and equal right to the benefits accruing therefrom. The spirit and theory of the law was, not to aid parents in educating their offspring by dividing a particular sum of money between them, but that the State should assume the whole expense of such education, and raise whatever sum was necessary therefor.

Every child was equally entitled to an *education*, whether residing in the heart of the city of New York, or on the hills of Hamilton county. But wholly overlooking the principles on which it was based, the "Free School act" of 1849 substantially retained the previously existing plan of distribution; one to counties and towns on the basis of population, to school districts on that of enumerated pupils. Not only was the cardinal theory of the law thus violated, but the unequal effects of such a distribution, when applied to such increased sums of money, became vastly more apparent than under the old law. In the densely populated districts of cities and villages, the schools received more than was sufficient for their support from the avails of the School Fund and from county and town taxes, while in the thinly inhabited country districts, it was necessary to resort to additional and onerous district taxes, (which had now taken the place of rate bills,) to make up deficiencies. It sometimes happened that this district additional tax reached several mills on the dollar; thus making a practical difference of two or three hundred per centum in the taxation of adjacent and not unfrequently adjoining property, to attain an object from which the benefits derived were equal, and the duty of contributing to the attainment of which was consequently equal.

Results so flagrantly unjust, could not long be tolerated. The rural regions

crushed by the operation of the law, through their representatives, repealed it. The agricultural population of the State have ever shown that they prize the blessing of universal education, and are willing to make as many sacrifices to secure it, as the inhabitants of cities. They demonstrated this by patiently paying more in proportion to their property, than the latter, to educate their children, for a period of more than fifty years anterior to 1849. It was the *structure* and not the *principle* of the free school law of 1849, which gave to the popular vote on it so well defined a local classification. The country cordially united with the cities in passing the school act of 1851, which was intended to recognize the same main principle, that the property of the State shall educate the children of the State. Striking, and at first view, seemingly unjust as are these results, no valid objection can be made to the provision of law which produces them, providing it produces the concurrent results of every where equal facilities for education. If the doctrine maintains that the property of the State, as such, shall support public education, no sound reason can be assigned why its aggregation in cities shall relieve it from paying as much on the dollar for that object, as is paid by the more thinly diffused wealth of the country; or why, as has been sometimes urged, country lines should limit its disbursement. If the doctrine maintains that the wealthy individual, though he have no children, shall aid his poorer neighbor in paying for schools, no sound reason can be assigned why the wealthy county or neighborhood shall not aid the poorer one for the same end. It is no greater hardship for New York to aid Oneida, than it is for the city of Utica, in that county, to aid one of its poorer towns, and the hardship is greater in neither case than it is to tax any one individual for the benefit of another. The only theory on which a State tax for education can be defended at all, is that education is a common concern and interest, as much as the support of government; and who thinks of claiming that the sums raised by tax for the latter purpose, shall be exclusively disbursed in the counties where they are collected? That education is a common concern and interest, in practice, no one will dispute. The vice and crime which it is intended to prevent, are hedged in by no county or town lines. The burglar who marauds, or the incendiary who lays in ashes, the wealth of cities, may come from the country. If ignorance and demoralization contaminate the purity of elections in one election district of a city, the corrupt vote of that district may control results which will be felt for generations on every farm and in every hamlet of the State.

It seems to me that this explicit statement as to the principle upon which alone can rest State taxation for public education is authoritative and final. How was this principle carried out in 1854?

By this same report, we find that the amount expended in 1852 for teachers' wages was \$1,931,870.13, of which the public money received for this purpose from the State Superintendent amounted to \$1,273,426.49, or 66 per cent, nearly two-thirds of the whole amount. Hence the equitable division of the public money was the main consideration, and Mr. Randall expresses his opinion that under existing arrangements the country districts were unduly favored.

Now come forward 23 years to the the Superintendent's Report for 1877. The amount expended for teachers' wages in 1876 was \$7,965,804.51, of which only \$2,949,702, or 37 per cent, was received from the State Superintendent. Consequently nearly twice as large a proportion, must be supplied by taxation. The public money is on the whole fairly distributed, and the application of the principle laid down to this portion of the money raised for schools, which was the immediate concern of Mr. Randall, has been, thanks to him and his successors, satisfactorily applied. But the question of local taxation, then of minor importance, has now become the foremost consideration, and it is our duty to see that the principle laid down is applied also to this source of revenue.

Surely we are not asking too much, when we demand that this taxation shall at least be equalized in the districts of each town. It is not a question of arbitration between certain tax payers in district No. 3 Schuyler Falls and district No. 11 Schuyler Falls. It is the broad question of the success or the failure of our public school system.

Government must abandon the theory that it is its province to educate the people, or it is bound, so far as laws can reasonably accomplish it, to make the burthens and benefits of any system which it employs for this object, alike throughout every square mile and between every individual within its borders.

I come now to the second objection; that the Township System will infringe upon the democratic rights of the school districts.

We have just shown that in the matter of privileges, our present system is far from democratic; that the education of the country boy depends largely upon the value of his father's farm.

We have shown that in the matter of taxation, our present system is far from democratic; that the less property a district possesses the more it is taxed and the less it receives.

The new system, then, offers more democratic privileges at more democratic prices: the brain and the pocket are both better served.

What, then, is lost? Whatever powers voters possess at district meetings, they will possess at town meetings. Each vote is a smaller ratio to the whole only in the same proportion as the power of the whole is greater.

Says Secretary Northrup, of Connecticut:

The people are learning that the Township System is truly democratic—equalizing both the expenses and the advantages of schools, relieving the poorer districts, securing better and more permanent teachers, and promoting unity, harmony and efficiency in the management of schools; and that the union of districts need not necessarily change the location of a single school house and does not imply centralization of power—that no other office gives such an opportunity "for the one man power" as that of District Committee. (*Report 1875, p. 112.*)

If that is true in Connecticut, how much truer is it in New York!

What other system was ever invented which so completely took out of the people's hands and put into those of the trustee, the entire control of all these matters?

In the matter of contracts with teachers, for instance, school trustees exercise authority almost unlimited. They must hire somebody for twenty-eight weeks, but they may disregard the unanimous vote of the district as to the sex of the teacher, the wages paid, the conditions of the contract, and the individual selected. In the November BULLETIN we spoke of two districts in which teachers were hired in defiance of the wishes of the district, kept through the term, and paid full wages, though not a single scholar came to school. The law punctiliously forbids the trustee to hire relatives within a given degree, but does not forbid him to hire himself, and this is frequently done. One trustee in Onondaga county now hires himself as teacher, and in another district a man barely escaped being elected because it was discovered that he meant to hire himself. Upon the last day he holds office, a trustee may make contract with a teacher which his successor must faithfully fulfil.

The trustee may even refuse to carry into execution a vote of the district as to the site of a school house. In 1848, District No. 2, Centreville, Alleghany county, voted to move the school-house, then so situated that some of the pupils had to walk four miles, and authorized a certain man to do the work. The trustees forbade him, the State Department upheld them, and the decision stands recorded in the Code of Public Instruction as an illustration of the law of the State.

The objector will reply that the trustee is elected by the people and therefore represents them. True: but so is a board of education for a township; with this difference, that in the town sufficient interest would be taken in the election, and sufficient honor would attach to the office, to secure men intelligent enough to fairly represent the people, interested enough to fulfil their duties. This is not now the case.

Take a single illustration. The law explicitly demands that within twenty-four hours of the annual district meeting, the clerk elect shall notify the town clerk who were the officers elected, under penalty of a fine of five dollars. Does M. M. B. know a single district clerk who has either notified the town clerk or paid his fine? Not one district clerk in Seneca county did so this year, if we may believe the commissioner, and the number throughout the State was very small. What shall we say of the efficiency of a law in which so plain a provision is disregarded?

"Small potatoes, few in the hill," is the fault of our district system. The interests involved in each district are so small that they are neglected. Of course there will be opposition, as there is to any change, among those who have not investigated the matter, and who perceive only that their nap is to be disturbed. Said Horace Mann, with reference to this very question:

The newer Western States enjoy a great advantage over the people of Massachusetts. They have been exempted from the immense labor of forever boasting of their ancestors, and so have had more time to devote to their posterity.

But as the new system becomes known, it will make friends. It is a question of getting a fair return for the immense outlay for education, not only in money but in the time of the children, an element often neglected but which makes up nineteen-twentieths of the cost of their instruction.

It may be objected that I have dwelt upon the dark side of our school system; that I have made no reference to its many elements of strength; to our union and normal and city schools; to our host of earnest and successful teachers; to the generous taxes which our people cheerfully raise; to the intelligence and prosperity and virtue of the Empire State, and to the American Eagle in general.

Well, I admit the American Eagle; I feel proud of the Empire State; I believe that our School System possesses elements of stability of strength shared by no other in this Union. Our hearts are with the public schools; else why are we here to-day? It is because our work and our absorbing interest is in

them that we have gathered to counsel for their welfare ; and if among ourselves we dwell upon their points of weakness, it is only that we may strengthen them where watchful experience shows them to be in danger.

As a practical result of this convention, I trust that a bill will be brought before the Legislature to introduce the Township System, and perhaps it may again be said of us as was said by Horace Mann in 1845.

The great State of New York is carrying forward the work of public education more rapidly than any other State in the Union, or any country in the world.

To Teachers and School Officers.

At the recent Convention of School Commissioners and City Superintendents, held at Utica, Feb. 19—21, the following Resolution was adopted by sections, and afterward as a whole:

Resolved, That we urge the immediate adoption of an act, embodying the following features:

1. Under penalty of forfeiting its public money, every town in this State shall at the next town meeting after the first day of January, 1879, elect a board of school trustees consisting of five members.

2. At their first meeting the board of trustees shall classify themselves by lot, to serve respectively one, two, three, four and five years; thereafter one trustee shall be elected upon a ballot separate from that for other town officers, at each annual town meeting, to serve five years. Any vacancy occurring through death, removal or resignation, shall be filled until the next town meeting by appointment from the supervisor, and shall then be filled by election for the unoccupied term.

3. To these boards of trustees shall be entrusted all the powers and duties now pertaining to district trustees so far as the same are not inconsistent with the other sections of the act. They shall also be empowered to hire a clerk.

4. The board of trustees of every town shall annually determine the amount of school tax, which together with such additional sums as the town may be entitled to receive from the State appropriation and all other sources may be sufficient and necessary to keep the schools of the town in successful operation for not less than twenty-eight weeks in each year, and the Board of Supervisors shall levy the same upon the property of the town as a part of the annual town tax.

5. At the time of making their first assessment after the passage of this act, the assessors of each town shall appraise all the school property belonging to the several districts of the town, and the Board of Supervisors shall assess the amount upon the entire property of the town to be collected with the next town tax; and shall remit to the tax-payers of each district the amount at which their school property was appraised under the provision now applying to the property of dissolved districts.

6. If it shall be found that on account of great distance from or difficulty of access to the proper town, some of the pupils thereof would be more conveniently accommodated in the schools of an adjoining town, some of the pupils thereof would be more conveniently accommodated in the schools of an adjoining town, it shall be the duty of trustees of such towns to make an arrangement by which such pupils may be instructed in the most convenient school of the adjoining town, and the expense of such instruction shall be paid as may be agreed upon by the trustees of such adjoining towns by resolution or agreement entered upon the minutes of the respective boards.

A committee was then appointed to present the subject at Albany, in order to secure, if possible, immediate legislative action. The committee was authorized to make such change in the proposed provisions of the bill as might seem to them expedient, upon further study of the town system in other States, and, especially, upon consultation with the teachers and school-officers of this State, in the hope that a bill may be drawn which shall receive the hearty support of the school authorities in every county.

Accordingly, the committee, earnestly desiring to represent the wishes of the entire State, and the mature judgment of all who are interested in education beg you to express immediately your judgment upon the following points, as to which some discussion has already been held, and to offer any further suggestions which occur to you.

UNDER SECTION 1:

(a) Should the law compel the adoption of the Township System upon a given date, or should it permit towns to adopt it by majority vote? Would it be a serious objection to the latter plan that Districts are now formed without much reference to Town lines, and that for one Town to adopt this system while its neighbors declined to do so would make confusion in those Districts which embrace territory in two or more Towns?

(b) Should the number of Town Trustees be uniform, or should it be left to the vote of the Town, under certain restrictions as to limit, say any odd number from 3 to 9?

UNDER SECTION 2:

Should the term of office exceed three years?

UNDER SECTION 3:

Should the general duties of Town Trustees be based upon those of District Trustees, or of the Boards of Education in Union Free Schools? Would it be an objection to the latter plan, that such Boards have explicit power to establish academic departments?

UNDER SECTION 4:

We shall be especially glad of any suggestions upon this point.

UNDER SECTION 5:

(a) Shall such equalization of school property be made at all or shall it be taken for granted that each district is compensated for the more than average amount it may have paid for a fine school-house in the more than average accommodation it receives from its location?

(b) *Shall Union Free Schools be exempted from the provisions of this act?*

(c) Could a practicable plan be devised by which the assessors should apportion the school tax among the Districts of the Town more equitably than by a uniform tax upon property?

UNDER SECTION 6:

This is copied directly from the Pennsylvania law, and has for twenty-five years solved satisfactorily the joint-district question in that State. Can anything better be suggested here?

OF THE BILL AS A WHOLE:

Are you in favor of the township system, providing a practicable plan, fitted to our own wants, can be devised for this State?

An *immediate* answer to some or all of the above queries is urgently requested in the interest of our public schools.

C. W. BARDEEN, A. J. PROVOST,

C. V. HOOPER, J. B. RILEY,

A. W. MOREHOUSE,

Committee.

I. What are the Common Schools of the State of New York at the Present Time ?

II. Some Inferences Therefrom.

—OR—

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CONCEPTION OF THE TERMS COMMON SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL, AND THE LAWS OF TENDENCY WHICH GOVERN THEM AND THEIR RELATIONS TO THE STATE.

BY JAMES HOOSE, A. M., PH. D., PRINCIPAL OF THE STATE NORMAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL, CORTLAND, N. Y.

It often saves time, fact, and argument to make haste slowly. This is especially true when discussing matters of public interest, as it is around these that the Press and the Rostrum throw so much language. It is quite characteristic of the present American to lay hold of the so-called practical rather than the discreetly philosophical—the practical is construed to mean that which produces the desired results immediately, whatever may be the ultimate outcome of the case. But a truer and more enduring wisdom is to abide a calmer research into the matter in hand, and so strike off the external wrappings from the subjects in question, in order to estimate with surer confidence the substance of the thing investigated.

Among the things which a multitude of words have darkened, and which some modern statesmanship has apparently misapprehended, is the school. The common school and the high school are before the people in too much of a haze; they lack proper perspective when looked at by many of our citizens. This arises from the obvious fact that the school is not thoroughly studied—it is not regarded as an institution which has its specific laws of growth, and which must be patiently studied in order to be well understood—it is treated as an ephemeral thing, and as one having no inherent vitality. A school, as a factor in a State policy, has its stages of growth from its inception and childhood to its adult maturity—it has its periods of development in this or that phase, and its periods of corresponding and apparent decay, but which instead are really processes of absorption and deposit, a falling away here and an extra growth there—it is as when the fat chubby babe becomes the lank and tall youth, which state again settles itself into the robust manhood of adult years.

It is the purpose of this paper to inquire patiently into the conception of the term common school—to do this in its historical phases, in the theories which

have entered into it, and to trace the successive stages of its development, thereby pointing out the law of tendency which it follows. While doing this the high school will appear at its proper stage, and also the law of tendency in the State history.

I. PRELIMINARY HISTORY.

The notion of the free common school was imported into the United States from Holland, where this school was early matured. The Puritans, with their English traditions and habits, went to Holland awhile, leaving England because of unpleasant religious complications. While in Leyden, * * * in Holland, from 1609 to 1620, they became acquainted with the common school—some of their number taught while sojourning there, and notably one William Brewster. These people left Holland, returned to England, and finally reached Plymouth Rock Dec. 11, 1620, O. S., William Brewster being among them. The civil institutions in Holland at this time were largely permeated with the elements of popular representation—the Puritans sympathized at once with them. The issue of all the forces was the following, so far as related to education, which I quoted to this body one year ago, but now again :

In Massachusetts, the general court, November 11, 1647, ordered as follows : “It is, therefore, ordered that every township in the jurisdiction, after the Lord has increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to read and write, whose wages shall be paid, either by the parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general, by way of supply, as the major part of those that order the prudentials of the town shall appoint, provided those that send their children be not oppressed by paying much more than they can have them taught for in other towns. And it is further ordered, that when any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families or households, they shall set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university ; provided, that if any town neglect the performance hereof above one year, that every such town shall pay five pounds to the next school till they shall perform this order.”

Again: In 1621 the Holland Dutch established civil government in New Amsterdam, now New York. They also provided the common or “free school, where children of quality, as well as of poor families, for a very small sum could be well and christianly educated and brought up.” These schools were elementary, teaching the rudiments of reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic.

In 1664 this colony capitulated to the English, who, however, introduced no pronounced changes until about 1690. The schools continued quite as they were. In 1655 an English school, parochial in its economy, was opened at Albany—others were soon begun around this centre. In 1710 an English school was opened at Schenectady, and in 1750 one at Schoharie. These schools were essentially parochial, and were in the interests of higher or classical learning, so far as it appears to me.

The English having at that time no system of public schools, they established these upon the English idea of higher education by tuition support, or upon a foundation in some manner—or else the lower schools were charity schools. The highest English influences and theories were put into form in New York in 1754 by establishing and opening King's College during that year. In 1773 the schools established under the Dutch, and continued down to that time, were to "instruct the children in the English as well as in the Dutch language." King's College, changed to Columbia College in 1784, was the leading school in this State for long years—it was begun and continued entirely in the interests of higher education. The lower schools, except the Dutch, were in the interest of the wealthy classes. In 1787 the office of Regent of the University of the State of New York was created. The Regents were made supervisors over the colleges, seminaries, and academies in the State—all being institutions for higher or classical education. In 1789 the State made provisions for aiding the secondary schools, or academies and seminaries—the first State aid to schools in this State: and for higher education, be it remembered. For the pupils paid their tuition the same as before, and this literature fund was distributed to the school corporation, "in proportion to the number of pupils in each seminary, who, for four months during the preceding year, shall have pursued therein classical studies, or the higher branches of English education, or both"—which means, practically, the first book of Virgil, and the Regents' examinations in arithmetic, geography, and grammar, which passed, the studies are called "higher branches." (Regents Man., ch. IV, § 6-7.) It may be suggested that this fund, by falling to the corporations managing the academies, enabled them to keep down the rates of tuition, thus aiding the poor and encouraging the ambitious—this is granted, but still it must be held that this fund was and is wholly in the interest of advanced education, for only pupils in these secondary branches of study entered into the financial advantages of this fund.

In 1795, six years after provisions were made for assisting higher schools, the State appropriated \$50,000 annually, for five years, as an experiment in aiding common schools. This was the first appearance in our State of the notion of State assistance to elementary schools. This was due quite materially to Gov. George Clinton, of Ulster county, who had become familiar with the schools of New York city. In 1800 this appropriation was discontinued by the State. The provisions of the act as passed continued in effect relating to the district organization, although no support was granted. The schools were by districts, under trustees, and all still subject to a town board of commissioners, consisting of from five to seven members.

In 1805, in New York city, under the lead of DeWitt Clinton, whose mother's family had long sojourned in Holland, there was incorporated "The Society for establishing a Free School in the city of New York, for the education of such poor children as to not belong to, or are not provided for by any religious society." Mr. Clinton was aided most in this by members of the Society of Friends.

These schools, for soon more than one was established, were supported by private enterprise at first, as donations, subscriptions, collections, grants, and the like. In 1813 the State again made provisions for encouraging common schools—this assistance has continued down to the present time, the State aiding more and more by gradual degrees, until 1867, when the rate-bill was abolished, and the property in the district now supports the school.

In 1874 the State passed a compulsory law, requiring pupils to attend the school which has been established for their benefit, and which the State undertakes to support.

In the next year, 1875, the State passed a law requiring free instruction in industrial drawing in certain schools of the State.

In 1827 the matter of State aid for preparing teachers, was publicly advocated by our statesmen as well as by enlightened educators. In 1835 academies were authorized to organize the Teachers' Class—this provision is still continued. This action of the State looked immediately towards the common school from the literature fund,—the only exception in its history, so far as I am aware. In 1844 the State opened one normal school at Albany, and in 1866 it made provisions for seven more, which are now organized, and in successful operation. All of these appliances belong within the notion or conception of the common school.

In New York city there was a high school in successful operation as early as 1805, so that it must have been of some years standing. A high school was opened in 1825, and another in 1826. In 1842 there was a discussion to organize more high schools, "in which should be taught practical mathematics, natural philosophy, book-keeping, and, in short, all those branches which are desirable for this active business of life in any of its departments, the learned professions excepted." (*Hist. Pub. Se. Soc.*, p. 116.) From about this time, 1841-3, normal training was provided for in this city.

The State law of 1867 provided for graded schools, union schools, and academic departments to these schools. These are usually called the high schools—they are only the upper grades of the system, and are the spirit and practice of the high school idea which has come down from the old free school idea that so early found expression in the Plymouth Rock colony and in New Amsterdam, rather than the English classical notion which also was embodied in the Massachusetts ordinance of 1647, and in our academies and seminaries.

II. RECAPITULATION—AND INFERENCES.

From this Preliminary History it appears :

1. That our present school system in the State is not homogeneous, but is composed of two distinct notions:

(a) The free common school is the Holland idea, coming into the United States at Plymouth Rock and at New Amsterdam.

(b) The classical or higher school, as a tuition school for the wealthy, is the idea imported by the English, both at Plymouth Rock and into our own State.

(c) The English, obtaining control of the State, early made prominent their

notion of the school, and fixed it permanently upon the State by legislation in 1787.

(d) The common school idea lived quietly by its inherent vitality, and through many vicissitudes in later years has finally implanted itself upon the State by legislation.

2. That this high school, which grew up out of the common school idea, differs from the high school which is out of the English idea, in this: the former has for its immediate objects a qualification for the business walks of life, while the latter aims at classical or higher learning in the colleges and universities.

3. That the free school, while it was sustained in the city of New York on the voluntary plan, yet has never prospered in the State except under public management.

4. That the normal school idea is an integral part of the common school notion, and a spontaneous outgrowth from it.

5. That the steady tendency of legislation in educational matters has been to centralize power, and to assert authority over the property and person of individual citizens. This appears at its culmination in the free-school act of 1867, and in the compulsory attendance law of 1874.

6. By comparison with older civilizations in foreign lands, the tendency must eventually show itself here as there, that the occupation of the father will be followed by the son, quite surely, generation after generation. This will better enable the school to introduce the "practical studies" with some certain significance, which can not now be done, for the son, with us, too often dislikes any calling especially because the father would bequeath it to him. This must and will change in due time in our country.

7. Another element of State development appears in its beginnings in the law which makes industrial drawing obligatory in certain schools. In order to show this clearly, permit the following line of discussion :

History shows that the people generally in a new country give their energies first to secure the means of living—this is by hunting, fishing, or agriculture in some phase. Whatever of education there is is elementary, and subserves business wants entirely. The people being well settled, and the country flourishing, wealth begins to extend and accumulate ; the land becomes more thickly inhabited ; the people extend their range of educational advantages beyond the elements and needs of simple business to the liberal, the professional, the æsthetical. As the State grows older and its native resources quite fully developed, the population denser, the necessities for a livelihood again make themselves felt in imperative tones. Under these demands the State attends to the case ; it readily discovers that the masses of its citizens must, in some way, become producers, if the evils of anarchy and pauperism would be avoided. There not being avenues for employment in agriculture or in the more necessary manufactures, new fields of labor must be opened. These fields are neither exclusively those of the necessities of life nor those of the

pure luxuries—they are both combined, and are hence known under the name of the Industrial Arts. It can be shown, historically, that the State has interested itself in them successfully only when her native resources have become insufficient to sustain the population, and when it became necessary to provide outlets for physical activities which should be sources of productive wealth. Legislation in this matter always marks this period in the growth of a State or people.

In many States in the Old World this period was reached many years ago—the thickly settled country, the very arable inches of the soil all tilled, the mineral resources developed to their utmost, manufactures extensively worked, and a surplus population to feed—this state of things compelled attention from the government. In many instances colonies were established in new lands as temporary reliefs; but eventually more must be done. The State set the children at work learning the arts of making more attractive the ordinary articles of household manufacture. To this was also added studies in improving machinery for production. As a whole, these are called the Arts of Design, better known with us as the Industrial Arts.

These growths indicate stages of State development—they come according to a necessary law of civilization. It is never found in history that a State sets itself at elementary schools in agriculture, or in commerce, or in mining, or in ordinary manufactures, as it does in elementary schools in the Industrial Arts; and for the very reason that these arts are the only avenues left into which to direct the surplus talents and energies of the people, the others being the actual forces which develop the State up to this stage.

It must hence follow that a State cannot prematurely introduce the schools for these arts and be successful in the effort. The older a State, the more numerous the population, the more fully developed are its agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial interests, the more imperative becomes the demand for schools in the Industrial Arts. Our oldest State, Massachusetts, has reached this stage, following the history in the Old World, when it has begun to feel the necessity for establishing schools for the masses, in which may be learned the handicrafts of profitable production. Some other States have manifested symptoms of uneasiness in these directions; others have been imitatively agitated only, there being no conditions in the State yet which warrant action, and hence such efforts to force upon a people these schools must be abortive until the "fullness of time" shall establish them. In our own State the advance movement indicating the approach of this stage is the law relating to teaching industrial drawing in some of our schools—and it is a grave query in my own mind whether the stage of growth is yet reached in our State when this law has the authority of necessity; but if it be not yet reached, the time cannot be far distant.

The approach of this third stage of State development in the United States is foreshadowed by the very general restlessness of the public in regard to the studies which shall be pursued in our common schools. Of late years the cry has gone up in the land that the studies are not "practical enough"—"Give us

more that is practical in studies." Now if practical means anything whatever in this connection, it must mean those studies which look directly and immediately to early productive business. This indicates the tendency of history. In the Old World the little girls of the schools are now taught to cook, to sew and knit, and to care for the house. I visited some public schools in London in which I saw hundreds of little girls engaged in this work—it is one of the daily exercises on the programme, assigned its hour among those of the other school studies. Symptoms of similar ideas are beginning to be experienced in some cities in the United States. Out of this general unrest in the matter of practical studies, so-called, comes this doubt in the minds of many as to the distance the State should go in supporting studies in our schools. This indicates clearly that our State has passed its elementary stage, that of studies simply for necessary business ; and that it is well advanced in its second stage of schools, those for a liberal education ; and that it is nearing the third stage of schools, which are looking to the higher ornamentation of the useful manufactures, called the Industrial Arts, which have been so long cultivated by some of the European States.

III. HISTORICAL GROWTH OF THE COMMON SCHOOL.

I now desire to trace the stages of our common school development. This will throw further light upon the historical growth of a State, educationally considered.

That the school has been undergoing material changes during its history in our State is apparent to any student of our schools. Our common school substantially began in 1813. At that time the country was new, the counties large, the schools of any kind few ; the people were intent upon developing and conquering the land and the native resources of the State. For a series of years the common school was the only school known in large portions of the counties ; in process of time the seminaries and academies gained more and more upon the public attention ; the common school continued to lay firmer hold upon the masses of the people ; in time the idea of graded schools gained for itself earnest attention, as it is founded upon the division-of-labor principle, which the ungraded school can not recognize. The act of 1867 gave encouragement to grading schools, by providing for organizing union schools.

In order to study this phase of school history in best advantage, and to be surer of my data, on January 14, 1878, I sent to the School Commissioners and Superintendents throughout the State a circular letter, which will appear in due sequence.

STATE NORMAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL, }
CORTLAND, N. Y., Jan. 14, 1878 }

MY DEAR SIR: Being very desirous of more thoroughly investigating the problem of public school education by the state, especially in the State of New York, I apply to you for the following data relative to your Commissioner district:

I. Are the public schools in the rural school districts attended by as many pupils as they were, say, twenty or twenty-five or more years ago, as near as

you can adjudge the case, referring to whatever of records you can command?

II. Are the average ages of pupils, as now represented in the rural districts, as high as they were at the above-named period of years ago?

III. If there have been changes (in I. and II. above), please cite some fairly representative facts to substantiate your answers.

IV. Assuming changes, how do you account for them?

V. Has there been a tendency either to increase or decrease the number, size, and importance of graded or of union schools within the above-named period of years?

VI. Supposing changes, what is your theory as to the efficient causes thereof, citing illustrative cases?

VII. How do the studies found in our rural schools at the present time compare, in number and in kind, with those of former years named above? Please give lists.

VIII. In your opinion, how do the thoroughness, efficiency, and general value of the rural schools at the present compare with those of twenty-five or more years ago?

Any additional data which you can add to the above, it being upon this general problem, will be most acceptable. Trusting that your interest in the common cause will plead my excuse for troubling you with this circular letter, and hoping for an early answer to the above, I have the honor to remain,

Most truly yours,

J. H. HOOSE, Principal.

It will be noticed that I venture no opinion in this letter—I simply ask questions and suggest lines of opinion, in order to receive answers that should be representative in the most satisfactory degree. The school officers of the State have put me under very marked obligations to them for their courtesy and industry and interest and ability which they have shown in responding, with the data.

Reviewing the questions and the answers, the recapitulation stands thus :

Question I.

Are the public schools in the rural districts attended by as many pupils as they were, say twenty or twenty-five or more years ago, as near as you can adjudge the case, referring to whatever of records you can command?

Of the answers received to this, five per cent of them answer "about the same"—this is from a county which has remained a mining or quarrying district, and agricultural, without any great changes; five per cent answer "average for the year is larger"—this is from a farming county situated near a large city; ninety per cent answer "not as many"—these represent the various portions of the State—some of these estimates give a reduction of fifteen per cent—some submit data showing a decrease of twenty per cent—another estimate reaches forty per cent—one commissioner places the figures at fifty per cent.

Question II.

Are the average ages of the pupils, as now represented in the rural districts, as high as they were at the above named period of years ago?

Five per cent of the answers give "about the same"; five per cent, "as high as they were, except in those districts which lie near large villages; ninety per cent report, "not as high"—some saying "not nearly so high," others saying "not so high by four or five years"—one estimates the ages at one-third less.

Question III.

If there have been changes (in I. and II. above) please cite some fairly representative facts to substantiate your answers.

Question IV.

Assuming changes, how do you account for them?

In answer to the above, one commissioner writes that a certain school, at the time referred to, "had in attendance during winter terms fifty or sixty pupils. Within the past five years the number has not exceeded thirty-five, and part of the time ten less. At another school "the decline has been about the same." At another "the number registered, which used to be from forty to fifty, is now usually less than twenty." At still another school "there has been a greater decline." At two others "the decline has not been as great." At still another "the decline has been as great as in any above mentioned." "I think these are fair illustrations of many schools in the rural districts. Of course some schools have not declined at all during this time, but they are the exceptions, and few at that."

In accounting for these changes he says:

"There are various causes helping to produce these results—1st, Families are not as large. 2d, Farms are larger and consequently a less number of families in a district. 3d, It is quite fashionable to send children from home to be educated. 4th, Many people love to be fashionable. 5th, Their improved circumstances (financially) enable them to gratify their desires, &c., &c."

Another commissioner writes that his predecessor actually annulled, during the period of nine years which he held the office, at least two district schools in his commissioner district because there were not enough pupils to support a school. "I have annulled such a school district the past summer, where the school has not been supported for two years for want of pupils. The latter school I remember visiting when I was a boy, and, as I now remember, it was then a school of say twenty to twenty-five pupils."

This change is because there are actually fewer inhabitants—families have fewer children—children are earlier sent away.

Another commissioner writes that he had taught in the county twenty-three years previous to the time of his taking the office of school commissioner, five years ago—making a total of twenty-eight years' acquaintance with the schools. On referring to his records he finds the country schools have been reduced in number of pupils fully fifteen per cent., according to population, during the last twenty years.

Reasons: Dissatisfaction on the part of tax-payers for being obliged to pay for educating children not their own—this resulting in a tendency to keep down expenses by the election of trustees who will run the schools for the least time and the least money, without much regard to excellence "In consequence of the above facts cheap teachers are employed, school houses are neglected.

The schools are not visited by parents, and those who are able send away their children as soon as they are able to leave home, and too often before that time."

Another commissioner writes that schools have decreased for the reason that the county is an agricultural county — the population of the rural districts has decreased in the last twenty-five years — hence the falling off in attendance.

Another commissioner says: "I will answer the last two questions by stating the fact that during the period above mentioned the public schools in this county have diminished in number of pupils at least one half. The reason of this is, undoubtedly, that all or nearly all of the pupils of those by-gone days received all their education at those schools, whereas now the older and more mature pupils (particularly the children of the more wealthy class of citizens) are sent away to some boarding school or higher institution of learning to complete their education.

Another commissioner says that, with very few exceptions, "it is universally conceded that the schools that numbered thirty-five, forty, and some fifty, thirty years ago, now number not more than twenty, twenty-five or thirty. Reasons given are that: "Thirty years ago the number of children in one family was greater. The present large dairy farms are made up of two or more small farms. Financially parents are better able to send children away to school."

Another commissioner writes that the number of pupils has decreased. Reasons, the same as given above: "Families of children are not so large. Farmers possess more of wealth than formerly and send their children away."

Another commissioner says the number of pupils has decreased because there is a tendency among boys and girls of thirteen years of age and upwards to go away from home to high schools.

Another commissioner writes that he thinks the average attendance for the year is larger. He attributes it to these causes: "1st, More pupils attend the summer schools. 2d, Pupils are more advanced in their studies now at the same age than they were twenty-five years ago. 3d, There are not as many pupils attending school over school age as there were at that time; consequently their ages would average lower."

Another commissioner sends the following: "In a certain school district, in 1856, were reported 103 children of school age. Whole number who attended school same portion of the year, 86. The above district reported for 1877, 75 children of school age. Sixty-four attended school some portion of the year.

Another district of same town reports in 1856, 41. In 1877, 32.

"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	38.	"	"	39.
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	352.	"	"	315.
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	35.	"	"	19.
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	203.	"	"	137.
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	157.	"	"	278.

The cause of the gain in the last is because of its manufacturing interests, three large factories having been built within the last twenty years. The reports that I send show an average falling off of children of school age equal to about twenty per cent."

In giving his reasons for the above, he says first of all : " This is a conundrum. More thickly settled, more inhabitants, less children. After all I think the answer is plain. Immigration of unmarried people of foreign element the first cause. The second and chief cause, the families of our native born children do not average as many children by at least one and one-half or two per cent as they did twenty years ago. This is a fact in this locality and I think will hold good the State over."

Another commissioner says : " I was rural born and bred. I attended school twenty-five years ago and taught from twenty to twenty-five years of age. My own district formerly numbered seventy, now thirty. Young men and women formerly attended school. Now in passing through the county, I find few over fifteen or eighteen. My reasons are that academies are more easy of access and people are wealthier, hence able to patronize them. Number of children in rural districts less than formerly. The Yankee breed seems to be running out. I think, however, that during the past ten years there has been a change in this respect, as many schools are filling up with little pupils."

Another commissioner was unable to refer to records, but says from what he has seen and heard the schools of rural districts are not attended by as many pupils as they were twenty-five years ago.

The reasons seem to be because the rural districts have become depopulated within the period named, and resident families almost invariably raise fewer children.

Another commissioner says the number of pupils attending school in our country districts is considerably smaller than twenty-five years ago. He accounts for it in this manner : " The farms were small, hence families were more numerous and children more plenty. Now the wealthy in cash but poor in children have bought up the smaller farms, and their former owners have moved where land is cheaper. Another fact : the foreign population, as they arrive, are a large proportion of them mechanics and day-laborers, and they settle in our villages. By way of digression, let me state that the increase of children among foreigners, after they arrive here, is about four to one of our native born citizens ! What does that fact indicate in reference to our future institutions and civilization if this large number of children is not required to receive the benefit public instruction, whether parents will make them or not ? "

Another commissioner says he thinks the attendance is less because children leave school sooner " to go to work," or are kept at home to help on account of scarcity of hired help in the country. They haste to be men and women, hence are too proud to go to home school.

Another commissioner states that the number in attendance is not so great. Many of the tanneries and saw mills have gone down and population has decreased, many new school districts having been organized.

Another commissioner answers that he taught in a certain school district twenty years ago and had eighty different pupils ; now it numbers forty ; and also says there are others similar. " Yet in districts remote from villages or

cities this is not the case, schools numbering as many now as then." As for reasons, he concludes that the rural districts are not as thickly inhabited as heretofore, the tendency being towards centralization. "The farms are larger, many moving into the cities and villages, some to retire, others to school their children."

Another commissioner writes that twenty five years ago all the schools in his district, save a few academies of minor importance, were small common schools. "Since then, four union schools have been built, one in 1866, one in 1867 and two in 1868. The average daily attendance in these four schools during the last eight years was 1091. Average daily attendance in the remaining 116 common schools during the same period was 2095, or not quite double that of the four union schools."

The only reason given was that those in the vicinity of union schools sought instruction therein.

Another Commissioner writes that schools of the rural districts are not as great in number as during the period mentioned. The facts to substantiate the above are the records kept in some of the district schools.

As reasons for this change he says a large percentage of the pupils in the schools at the period mentioned were of native extraction, and have sought homes in the West and South-west, while the homesteads are either still occupied by the sires, if by any member of the family, almost invariably with few or no children. This, of necessity, compels a reduction of numbers in the extreme rural districts, while the little centres around which the foreign element congregates are teeming with children.

Another Commissioner annexes to his statement a table showing a comparison between the years 1865 and 1877, and including his commissioner district as a whole. He states that the school population in that time increased 1,314; the number attending school increased 1,766. He observes that in those towns whose population has least increased, the average daily attendance has increased in a greater ratio than in others. This Commissioner, in citing a "truly rural" district, where the school house is located in the woods, states that since 1865 its population has increased from 161 to 196, and its average daily attendance from 18 to 62. Another district has an increase of school population from 50 to 58; its average daily attendance from 13 to 38. Another district, whose average daily attendance has increased from 18 to 27, has in the school population an increase of one. In another district the population decreased 2, and its average daily attendance increased from 6 to 16.

This Commissioner attributes these changes, "1st, To better teachers produced by our Institutes and Normal Schools; 2d, To better and more general appreciation of the advantages of good schools; 3d, To the inevitable progress towards improvement."

Another Commissioner writes that in the agricultural districts he has not been able to discover any material change in the condition of the schools for the past twenty-five years, and cites, as a case to illustrate his statement, his

own district, where he has always lived—there the attendance does not vary one per cent, and thinks this a fair illustration of others similarly situated.

Another commissioner thinks there is a change, yet adds that he believes the average attendance for the entire year, compared with the number of children of school age in the several districts, is better than it was twenty-five years ago. This commissioner accounts for these changes by saying there is a lack of children; families are not as large (excepting Irish, etc., and their children do not attend school much after they are eight or nine years old) as at the time referred to above, when the name of a parent was called in order to mark the days' attendance of each family; then it was not strange to note 6, 8, 10, 12 as the number of children from a single family. Now you will hardly find more than the highest number named, in the whole district, belonging to the families that are the permanent residents. Secondly, the schools in the adjoining villages and cities are better. Our State schools are free and offer superior advantages.

Another commissioner states that there has been a gradual and constant improvement in the public schools of his commissioner district in every particular during the last twenty five years.

Another commissioner says the number of pupils now attending district schools "are unquestionably" less. Schools with which he has been acquainted prove this fact, as the pupils are fewer and those attending district schools leave sooner to enter union schools or academies. Those remaining, becoming discontented by seeing their companions leave, have been discouraged and have left school younger for work or idleness.

A gentleman cites a district which, thirty years ago, sent over seventy pupils, many of them young men and women, to its school—to-day this school contains less than fifteen children.

Another commissioner thinks that in the rural schools the number of pupils attending is not as great as in 1858. "The whole number taught in our county during that year was 12,285, of which number 2,264 attended school less than two months, and 4,693 less than four months. Our county, however, embraced one more town at that time—the largest town having since been set off into Schuyler County." "The reasons are, more of the older pupils go away from home to attend high schools, normal schools, etc., there being more of these schools than in 1853, and it being more *fashionable* to attend the high schools. Another cause is that there are not so many children of school age, large families being considered objectionable by many. It was not an uncommon thing then to raise families of ten or twelve children; now two or three satisfy the ambition of parents in that direction."

Question V.

Has there been a tendency either to increase or to decrease the number, size, and importance of graded or of union schools, within the above named period of years?

Question VI.

Supposing changes, what is your theory as to the efficient causes thereof, citing illustrative cases ?

Two commissioners report that there are no union graded schools in their districts — one or two say nothing upon the point — all the rest are unanimous in reporting a pronounced increase in the number, size and importance of these schools within the last quarter of a century.

One commissioner writes that his theory for these changes is, "that better work may be done at less cost by a division of pupils according to some standard, and by giving to each department a teacher adapted to the work in that department rather than to give all kinds of work to one person."

Another commissioner says, "a better sense of the importance of education."

Another commissioner says it "is because they receive the better class of scholars from the rural districts. Better teachers are employed, better supervision is secured, more interest introduced, and parents find it pays even to board their children away from home in order to secure these benefits."

Another commissioner attributes the cause to a demand of the people for a higher and more finished education than can be obtained in rural schools.

Another commissioner thinks the causes may be summed up in this—"better home advantages."

Another commissioner assigns as the cause, "one teacher can do more effectual work in a graded school."

Another commissioner regards the cause to be a desire for higher education at less expense.

Another commissioner gives as one reason, "better teachers and, I might say, better school buildings."

Another commissioner says, "they give better advantages."

Another commissioner says, "the increased interest of the people in common-school education, and the conviction that the ungraded school does not do the work required, citing in proof three towns, one of which is now enjoying its graded school, another has just voted a Union School for these very reasons, and still another is about to do so."

Another commissioner says, "of the only Union Free School in this district, that it was established in order that the village might possess better advantages for primary and intermediate schools, and also of a High School;" and he thinks if other changes are made, they will be for the same reasons.

One commissioner assigns no reason except the increase of children in our villages.

Another commissioner claims that thus better teachers can be secured, and hence better results.

Another commissioner writes, "that parents find their children receive a fair business education at much less expense, and at home; and the doors are open alike to rich and poor."

Again, one writes that "the tendency has been and is to increase the number, size, and importance of both union and graded schools. Reasons are a de-

mand for greater thoroughness in the studies pursued, which can better be accomplished by the consolidation of districts, the supervision of an intelligent board of education, and the consequent employment of a thoroughly efficient corps of teachers. This results as a natural consequence, as the best talent tends towards those schools which offer the longest terms even at reduced wages, where the occupant of a position from principal to subordinate is not subject to the caprice of a single trustee. Secondly, instead of entertaining the mischievous idea that the children must be sent away from home at a tender age to secure advantages superior to those offered by the average common school, parents have conceived the more sensible plan of bringing these advantages to their children. This they have been able to do by availing themselves of the talent as sent out by the various Normal Schools throughout the State, for almost invariably you will find either graduates or undergraduates in these schools. This man says, "I attribute the establishment of the large union school to my being able to convince the people there that they could not have a good school without it."

Another writes that in a village school in 1860, one-fourth of the children of the district attended school; in 1877 nearly one-half between the ages of five and twenty-one attended, making an increase of one hundred per cent., and more than that if we take into consideration the length of time taught.

In another village school in 1857, the district reported ninety-eight children, kept a school for thirty weeks, at a cost of about two hundred dollars and had an attendance of thirty-nine. In 1877 it reported 116 pupils, kept a school forty-three weeks and had an average attendance of fifty-two.

This commissioner, in speaking of one of the best schools in his charge, states that in 1854 it was taught in a little room by a young man for \$12 per month, and he boarded around. The number of children he was unable to give, as the records were destroyed by fire, but the teacher says he taught five months and thought the school averaged about thirty. The population was at that time about one half of the present number. In 1877 it reported an attendance of seventy-three, and a school was taught forty-one weeks by two teachers. In these cases the population is largely composed of foreigners. In some families are grown persons of thirty-five and forty years of age who can barely write their names, while their brothers and sisters of from fourteen to eighteen years are well grounded in the common English branches. The cause for this improvement seems to be, that "the parties that vote and lay the taxes and appropriate the money are not the ones who pay. When every person paid for the education of his own children, the attendance was small, the teachers were those who could work cheap, and the schools were only taught long enough to draw the public money. Especially was this the case where many of the patrons were foreigners, unable to read or write perhaps, and needing every cent for more substantial purposes."

Another attributes the increase to "the customs, habits, wealth, living, prodigality, etc., of the people, together with a desire to be in places which are centres, which have had much to do with it; and the district which had in it a

small village or hamlet has had its territory enlarged by additions thereto from adjoining districts. It has become very fashionable to go away to school, even if the one at home be better ; and many within six or eight miles of a thriving town or city go there, if they can not induce their parents to send them to a second-rate boarding school. Two towns which employed but three teachers, now employ twenty and six, and with these two exceptions there were no districts that employed more than one teacher ; now there are four besides the two above mentioned in this commissioner district that employ from two to four each."

Again, one commissioner says, that " by comparing the school statistics on file in his office, I find that five additional departments have been formed during the last five years. The number of graduates of Normal Schools teaching here has increased by nine, and this while the population has remained the same. The causes which have contributed most to the improvement of our schools, in my judgment, are the abolition of the rate bill, and the inauguration of Teachers' Institutes, Normal Schools, and (notwithstanding the hue and cry against it) the present system of school supervision "

Another says : " In my district, in five or six years, just about seven schools have changed from common district to union or graded schools, of two or more departments. These changes have been made to meet the growing demand for something better than the common district school of the present time."

" There has been one union school organized in this commissioner district in the past four years," says another commissioner. He gives as his reason that it affords a more suitable opportunity for teachers to better or more thoroughly prepare themselves for teaching.

Another gives an increase of graded schools and a decrease of academies ; " because it is believed that graded schools can do more effective work, owing to their organization. Tuition is free to those living in the district. Free tuition and books draw away many to Normal Schools."

By a happy chance I recently had an opportunity to consult a book of minutes kept by the clerk of a school district, which contains occasional statistics from the year 1834 downwards to the present time. Selecting somewhat at random, the following are noted :

In 1837 there were in the district 53 children between the ages 5 and 16 years ; 50 of these were taught in school some portion of the year. In 1840 the whole number of children between 5 and 16 was 49, and the number taught was 60. In 1841, the number of children was 45 ; the number taught was 64. In 1842, the number of children was 48 ; the number attending school was 55. In 1843, the numbers were, respectively, 42 and 61 ; in 1844, 38 and 29. This school numbers only about 10 pupils at the present time.

These statistics show that those over sixteen years of age attended school in pronounced numbers during those years. This district was only a sample of the rural school at one time in its history.

Consulting reports, there appear the following facts concerning the number of school districts in the State :

In 1851 there were.....	11,479
In 1867 there were.....	11,722
In 16 years there was a gain of.....	243
In 1877 there were.....	11,287

This shows a decrease since 1867, or within 10 years, of 445 districts ; and a total decrease since 1851, or during the last 26 years, of 192 school districts.

Question VII.

How do the studies found in our rural schools, at the present time, compare in number and in kind with those of former years named above ? Please give lists.

Question VIII.

In your opinion, how do the thoroughness, efficiency, and general value of the rural schools at the present compare with those of twenty-five or more years ago ?

Any additional data which you can add to the above, it being upon this general problem, will be most acceptable. Trusting that your interest in the common cause will plead my excuse for troubling you with this circular letter, and hoping for an early answer to the above, I have the honor to remain, etc.

One commissioner says that the studies of our rural schools compare favorably with those of twenty years ago, both in number and kind, and also that the thoroughness, efficiency, and general value of the schools compare favorably.

Another commissioner thinks they pursue nearly the same branches of study now as twenty-five years ago ; viz. as a

Former List.

Reading,
Writing,
Spelling,
Grammar,
Geography,
Arithmetic,
Algebra,

Present List.

Reading, Philosophy,
Writing, Astronomy,
Spelling, Physiology,
Grammar, Drawing,
Geography, Int. Arithmetic,
Arithmetic, Civil Government,
Algebra, Natural Philosophy,
History, Book-keeping,
Rhetoric, Geometry.

One commissioner sends the list of studies actually pursued twenty-five years ago as being :

Arithmetic,
Grammar,

Reading,
Spelling.

Now the studies of all the schools of the 121 districts under his jurisdiction are :

Reading,
Spelling,

Geography,
U. S. History,

Arithmetic,
Grammar,

Civil Government,
Science of Penmanship,

and in many schools Algebra and Geometry.

He also says that in his opinion the schools have greatly advanced in thoroughness, efficiency, and general value. "I have learned from a reliable source that twenty-five years ago the most advanced pupils in Arithmetic were floundering along in fractions; now the highest principles of Arithmetic are taught in all the schools. Then Geography was a study of memory only; now it is a study of memory, science, and skill. Then only one or two pupils of a school studied Grammar; now all who are not sufficiently advanced to pursue the study of Grammar are receiving oral instruction in language. Then, until pupils had completed their second or third year of school, they were confined to reading and spelling, commencing with letters; now they commence with words, and at the same stage are instructed in number, place, and language."

Also the same as regards efficiency—that is, it compares favorably.

Another commissioner thinks the former list is augmented at present by many so-called higher branches. As to thoroughness, efficiency, and general value, the comparison is favorable.

Another commissioner thinks that the present list of studies is greater than formerly, and consider our present schools much more efficient and valuable than formerly.

Another commissioner considers the present curriculum of studies somewhat enlarged. In thoroughness, efficiency, and general value the schools are decidedly in advance.

Another commissioner considers the change of studies to be slight, but in method and efficiency for the better.

Again, one says the number of studies is greater at present, but the work done is more thorough and efficient.

Again, a commissioner considers the number about the same, and "believes the rural schools of to-day compare very favorably with those of twenty-five years ago."

Another commissioner considers the present list of studies increased, and that in efficiency the comparison is favorable to the schools of the present.

Another commissioner says more studies are taken by the pupils, and the schools are more thorough, efficient, and practical.

Still another finds but few changes in the studies pursued. He thinks "the schools of to-day do not compare favorably with those of twenty-five years ago. The first cause is that the teachers are not of the same standard they were at that time. Second, on account of the ages of the scholars being less caused, perhaps, by attending higher schools as soon they get a little advanced. Cheap teachers, poor teachers, and the loss of all interest in the cause of education by the patrons of the schools, are some of the causes of their inefficiency and want of thoroughness.

Another commissioner considers the range of studies wider now than formerly.

He also thinks the "branches are better taught but owing to the younger state of the pupils they may not be more thoroughly understood. Another drawback to their present efficiency is the power the childless tax-payer is able to exert at school meetings."

Another commissioner says the studies pursued now are considerably different. Twenty-five years ago, spelling, reading, writing, geography, and occasionally grammar were pursued. Now all the above studies are pursued together with history, science of government, drawing and the cream or s ample of common sense of geology, astronomy, physiology and the moral obligations of pupils to parents and their country, and their recipocal relations to each other and society."

Another commissioner writes that the studies are about the same, excluding the "ologies, oosophies and ornamentals," and decides that their thoroughness and efficiency are "vastly improved."

Again, a commissioner writes that grammar is poorly taught in many more of the schools than it was twenty-five years ago. The range of studies is somewhat enlarged. Yet the rural schools are at present more efficient and of greater value.

Another considers the list of studies increased by one or more. Thinks the schools are more thoroughly taught and better governed than in former days; that methods of teaching have been improved much.

Another thinks the union and graded school tends to diminish the efficiency of the common school.

Another says he thinks the union and graded schools are better, and this fact has tended to diminish the interest and efficiency of the average district school.

Another says, "the studies are much the same, only that at a former period elementary philosophy, physiology and chemistry were taught, while at the present they are not found in the schools. We have now reading, writing, geography, grammar, arithmetic, algebra and history." This question the writer considers "the most difficult to answer because there has been such a complete revolution in the conception of to-day (as compared with twenty years ago) as to what is, and what is not within the province of a teacher, while the characteristics composing the schools are so entirely different that a comparison of the schools of the two periods in question must of necessity result both favorably and unfavorably for each." He says: "Again, I must repeat that the most favorable results are observable in those schools under the supervision of teachers with normal training, and I am satisfied that each year's experience will but the more certainly establish the fact that the normal schools of the State are not only a national but a world wide blessing."

"The studies now pursued are much more varied and advanced than formerly," says another Commissioner. "In thoroughness, efficiency, and general value the schools, intellectually, have advanced as much as they have materially, or outwardly. Morally, they have not shown as desirable a progress"

Another says, "the list of studies is greater. As to efficiency, etc., they are better. Were it not for the demand for cheap teachers (which is both injurious and disgraceful) our schools would be much better than they now are. The people want the public money to pay the entire expense. Again, children finish their education and have a more general knowledge at an earlier age than they did twenty or twenty-five years ago. After they commence school, more attend regularly and continue in school until they finish, which accounts for the above results."

Another thinks studies are more advanced, owing to better informed and more efficient teachers and better ways of presenting subjects in text books; better teachers, because of better facilities for preparing teachers, in Normal Schools particularly. They are more efficient, for reasons given above.

Another writes that "studies are about the same in the majority of schools. The thoroughness, efficiency, and value of the rural schools are not as great as they ought to or might be." He thinks there should be "a uniform standard of qualifications of teachers in the different grades. Some Commissioners try to elevate the standard of qualifications, while others lower it."

Another thinks more studies are pursued now than twenty or thirty years ago. He also believes "the schools to be better now than in 1853; the instruction has greater scope; presume the pupils of '53 understood arithmetic as well. It would hardly do for me to consider the schools of this county less efficient than in '53, especially as I have had so much to do with them for six years past. I am satisfied, however, that our schools ought to do better work than they now do. When we consider that the school tax is larger than all others combined, it is not at all strange that some who have no children complain. One great draw-back to our schools is the frequent change of teachers most of them changing every term—too much patch-work about it. I have been urging our district to change their custom in this respect, and also in regard to school terms. As it is now, the district schools are in session during July and August, the worst time in the year for study, and a time when children are most needed at home in the rural districts. Now there is usually a vacation during September and October. Several districts have already changed—having three terms instead of two. The average attendance is better after such a change."

IV. RECAPITULATION OF LETTERS.

These letters contain a multitude of facts for earnest study by the thoughtful student of our public school policy.

Herein appear phases of the Common School that argue of needs, that point out conditions which should be bettered. There is a somewhat marvelous uniformity of reasons assigned for certain phases which appear in the schools.

Time forbids that I write much here of the detailed matters that have been presented in these letters. I must confine myself to the evident teachings that are indicated—for the data are but so many indices pointing the way in which the present times and events are tending.

Amidst all these opinions, however various in the minute statements, there appear clearly the following facts :

1. That the common or rural schools are diminishing in number.
2. That the number of pupils that attend these schools is decreasing.
3. That the average ages of these pupils is materially lessening.
4. That these changes, while steadily going forward, are not uniformly perceptible in all the counties.
5. That the union graded schools are increasing in number and in importance — and that they are considered as bringing the high school advantages nearer home.
6. That the rural school population is gradually diminishing in number.
7. That the population of the State is more or less rapidly gravitating towards centres

These things being true, it is unmistakably evident that the common school of to-day is quite a different element in our State policy from what it was years ago when it was before our State for legislation. The rural school was then the powerful school, filled with young men and young women, who were the mass as well as the strength of the youth of the entire State. To-day the rural school is the very elementary school, with its little children, scarcely a young man or a young woman being found therein. The loci of the strength of the common schools have moved into centres, following the population — the backwoods themselves even have fled, and with them the large rural school with its pack of big boys and girls. Herein then consists the law of the rural district school : That it inevitably gravitates toward the village — this school is apparently not permanent to the rural country.

In this are the district schools but following the law of tendency which governs the places of business, and the churches. The little store, and smithy, and church at the cross roads in former days, are now desolate — the sugar is not told out, the anvil is not rung, the Word is not preached there now — all have “ moved into town.”

In the Old World this tendency of the population to gather into centres is a striking feature as one travels over the country — long stretches of arable acres under high tillage, and the dwellings not being alone as here, but in little hamlets, or towns, or villages here and there. In the long-distant history of the future, the traveller will find the same phenomena in the United States, for even now are they becoming apparent.

The necessary and legitimate sequence of the state of things must now be obvious. It is that legislation by the state must point itself directly towards the schools where they now are, rather than towards where they were years ago, if the schools are to be helped. The schools follow an imperative law of state development, and the state legislation should follow the schools.

With all this centralization of the population in fact there follow the desire to centralize power. It has already been shown that centralized power has followed the notion of the common school in the fact of school support by a prop-

erty tax, and by a compulsory attendance law — it now further appears in the discussion of the township system of supervision which is desired. The very first experiment, that of 1795-1800, embodied practically the elements of this same idea, as has been shown — or that of a town commission — then came the county superintendent — then the town superintendent — then the present commissioner system — all of these are phases of the notion of supervision, which is but another name for centralized power. So that this present desire to inaugurate a township board in place of the various trustees is an effort to add more to the centralized power over the schools.

It is a maxim in business that the greatest return from any outlay is from good supervision. This is conceded in practical business as an inevitable law of production. But our people are yet tender of this in politics, and with too much right, often times, on their side, because men holding so much power so very frequently prostitute it to the basest purposes of self-aggrandizement. Were our public officers all high minded, honorable, unselfish men in the discharge of their duties, the people would soon be as willing to recognize the value of centralized authority in public business as they now are in private affairs, for this is the pronounced law of the business world.

It may be as well here to note another influence which has operated upon the common school. I call attention to it here as an obvious fact, as it appears to me, rather than to pass an opinion upon it. Allusion has been made to the two ideas which are found in our schools of the state — the Holland or free school notion for the masses, and the English or classical tuition school for the wealthy. Both of these have been fostered by our state, the English longest and uninterruptedly. The Regents' certificate is considered the bridge over which the ambitious pupil passes from the common English studies into the higher English and classical. These examinations are very properly within the reach of the average pupil — hence there is awakened the ambition to secure the certificate even in the rural schools, now permitted. Now observe the effect upon the pupil. With this document he gains admission to any academy or seminary in the authorized list. These schools are, in their spirit and practice, ungraded — the pupil feels himself at liberty to drop his common English branches without more ado, and devote his energies to the higher and classical studies. This state of things is necessarily followed by its inevitable consequences, which are these — the pupil is not duly impressed with the absolute importance of the common English branches, he drops them before he is well in hand with them, he regards them as a stumbling block over which he must go on his way to the advanced studies, he drops them as soon as he may, he pursues his higher branches, he goes out to teach. With all of these antecedents and influences, how and what will he probably teach in the common schools of the state? The voice of the land, including that of the Regents, as shown by their examinations, is that our common schools are lamentably deficient in thoroughness in the common branches. Is it any marvel? Could one expect otherwise, under the law of circumstances? I say not this to criticise, but to do my duty as a friend to all the schools, and to thorough education.

V. INFERENCES FROM THE FOREGOING.

Having stated the historical growth of our school ideas and pointed out the laws of tendency in both school and state development, it remains to draw inferences therefrom.

1. It is clearly evident that the purposes of our schools in the State lack homogeneity. As far as possible this should be corrected and unified, which probably can only be accomplished in the line of compromising upon the needs which inevitably follow the law of centralization in the growth of a state population—that is, the notion of the common school and that of the secondary classical school must be harmonized in the upper or high school idea that has evolved itself from the common school, and which looks towards both the productive labor of life and the liberal education which leads to the professions.

Absolute homogeneity of school purposes will not exist in the State, from the very nature of the historical antecedents which have been traced, until all the school supervision in the State shall be in the power of some one central authority. However well and ably the powers now in supervisory authority may discharge their duties, yet the absence of oneness is often apparent, and hence defects must the longer continue. The two school ideas which obtained a footing in the State should be guided into unity of purpose.

2. In this connection it may be well to compare the graded school, which is of the common-school idea, with the academy, which is the tuition-school notion. The graded school is based upon the well-established business principle of division of labor in production; being independent of tuition, it can insist upon thorough scholarship without any fear of capricious choice or whim of the pupil. The grading includes, usually, the higher English and classical studies. The academy is a school where choice and caprice too often determine the branches in the course pursued. As the law of tendency has made itself felt these schools have adopted, from necessity to life, more and more of what are called "Practical" or "Business Courses." The very latest phase of this tendency is the announcement that "dress-making is to be taught at Lasell Seminary, Auburndale, Mass."—this being appended to the announcement: "The average salary of female teachers in Boston is \$500; that of good cutters is \$1,200."

"Lasell Seminary issues a circular on its new department of instruction, dress-making, and giving full particulars: 'A teacher of large experience—herself a practical dress-maker—will instruct a volunteer class in S. B. Taylor's system of cutting and fitting. This method is now generally adopted by first-class establishments for dress making. It applies, not only to dresses, but to under and outer garments as well. It teaches to take correct measures, and from these to draft and cut with accuracy. These being thoroughly acquired, basting will be taught, so that each may test her knowledge and be able to use it. The teacher binds herself to hold her class till each one masters and applies the principles. Terms for the entire course of instruction, including

square, set of scales, measure, and instruction-book (these becoming the student's property and useful always), \$20.00.' "

But notice, that in the primary schools of England this work is quite substantially done, for the code specifies that the little girls from three to five years of age are taught to thread needles and to hem. They are continued in this work, by regular course, until they are twelve or thirteen years old, at which time they are proficient in "cutting out any plain garment and fixing it for a Junior Class." Their work also includes knitting, darning, and patching.

3. Shall the graded school direct its upper studies towards a liberal culture, usually known under the name of college? This question is the very bone of contention in the land. Following the English idea, which has mainly reigned supreme in the tuition schools and which exerted a wide influence in our State in its second stage of tendency, the upper grades were faced towards college. Is it wise now to make any change of front? In Boston the struggle has come fairly out — Harvard College was the goal — lately the Boston school of Technology beckons towards the upper courses. The tax payers, feeling the law of state development beginning to be near, demanded that the upper courses should be modified so as to face the School of Technology as well as the College. However the case now hangs in limbo, the Technical School must win in the end — it is but according to law of growth. Feeling, as I do, the force of inevitable history, I unhesitatingly pronounce in favor of so modifying the upper courses of study in the higher grades that a preparation for the demands of business shall be satisfied, as well as the requirements for college. This was the purpose of the high school idea in New York city in 1842. The particular line of industry which shall be favored must depend upon economic principles.

In this view it will be well for our city schools to consider, as they must in time, the economic handicraft arts which may be introduced to advantage in the lower grades.

Since writing the above I have learned of the action of the board of education of Rochester in regard to cutting off the upper courses from the high school. Although the purpose there appears to be economic in principle, yet I regard it as really a contest of courses of study.

4. Are high schools a part of our free school idea? They are simply, and logically, and legally, the outcome of the law of 1867, which provided for and encouraged the union graded schools. They are just as much an integral portion of our free school notion as the beard is a part of the possibilities and actualities of an eleven year old boy — the high school and the beard grow out in due time, because they are native elements in the nature of the case. The beard can be cut off, but it will grow out again — so the state or localities may cut off the high school, but it must spring up again, as long as the law allows union and graded schools to exist.

5. Another legitimate inference is this — the common school gravitating towards the village, as to its size and importance, and the village school being converted into a graded school with higher departments, it follows that any

provisions which the state may make for preparing teachers for the public schools of the state, which do not include a preparation for teaching these upper departments must necessarily be only a partial preparation for the complete common schools. Here then appear the duties of all normal or professional efforts for aiding teachers.

6. It has been clearly shown that the rural schools are actually only elementary schools — that the village schools are also elementary and high schools. This state of fact requires careful attention. The teachers for the rural schools should be employed intelligently and with a full appreciation of the state of the case. Inasmuch as the relative grade of the schools in any given section should be certainly known by the one who engages the teacher for the schools — and because an extended range of acquaintance among the schools is essential to this — it must follow that our present system of supervision by district trustees is not in harmony with the necessities in the case. At the very least, a township board should exist to hire all the teachers for the schools in the town. This board could grade the teachers according to the schools, which would be a great gain to all. But a more logical inference in this matter would make a hiring power of teachers co-extensive with the examining and inspecting power. This alone would give complete homogeneity. What reason can be shown why the same authority should be allowed to engage teachers in all the various wards of a city, and to inspect the schools, that can not be advanced with equal force in favor of putting all the rural schools of a county under one board of management in a similar manner? Too much centralization again? How much more would that be than the present power of a commissioner which can annul or withhold a certificate, thus virtually exercising strong despotic power over a school district?

7. Under this unit supervision of the schools in a town or county, there should be established a virtual grading of studies to be pursued in the schools. Each school should be assigned its list of branches, and the order in which they must be followed — let the actual amount which the individual school shall pursue in any given term be left to the capacities of the school. By this arrangement much wiser outlay of energies would follow. This could be carried out very readily by establishing, substantially, the subject matter of the course by topics. This would easily accommodate itself to a uniformity or to a variety of text books in the schools. I venture the suggestion that the tendency at the present time is to introduce too many subjects of study into our common schools, especially as the ages of the children show them to be so young. It is a question of some moment whether our children, at the age of their attendance, can profitably and thoroughly pursue so many studies as are reported.

8. Again : The state assuming to meet the expenses of the schools, the general supervision of them, and to establish the school ages, it should absolutely insist upon participation in its outlays. If education be of sufficient importance to warrant the devising and erecting of so much and expensive machinery, it would be legitimate to compel materials to be at hand for assisting in carrying to completion the intent of the outlay.

9. Again : These letters have given sufficient data to predicate this : That permanency of employment to teachers will be better secured in proportion to the number of graded schools that are organized, and to the duration of tenure of and responsibilities resting upon the hiring powers. These schools give, usually, longer engagements to teachers than the ungraded schools in the rural districts. The township system of trusteeship could secure this end without difficulty. This would be a pronounced gain to the profession of teaching, and would be an inducement for young men and women to prepare themselves for the work, that would induce first-class talent to remain longer in the schools.

10. Again : The people are coming to realize the value of united efforts in organizing the schools ; to understand that better teaching can be done in large schools than in small ones, provided the school be graded properly and a full staff of teachers be employed. Hence union schools will continue to increase in number and in efficiency. It may be well here to note a point in connection with the staff of teachers to be employed in any given case, whether in the rural school or in the town or city school. One of the evils of the ungraded rural school, where the case happens sometimes, is that of placing too many pupils under one teacher for personal instruction. In no case can a teacher hope to do anything like the most effective work with over fifty pupils at the outside—better have less. The only exceptions that can be safely made are with advanced pupils, to whom the lecture may suffice, if it ever does serve in full.

11. Again : Inasmuch as the earlier legal school age was between five and sixteen years, which ages did not include the actual attendance ; and because of this fact the legal age was extended to twenty-one years ; and because it now appears again that it is rarely seen that pupils attend our public schools who are over sixteen or eighteen years of age—because of these data it may be a question of much gravity whether the truest policy of the school economy of the State does not lie in the direction of limiting the legal school age to a number of years less than twenty-one. But upon this point I yet venture no decided opinion, as I have not studied it carefully enough. History calls attention to it, however.

12. Again : Inasmuch as the rural school population is gradually diminishing, thus holding the schools there to an elementary standard, and the people send their older children to the centres to be educated at an extra expense, should these citizens be continually obliged to pay school taxes at home ?

History clearly discovers the fact that public schools never can flourish in the country unless at State control. If the State management be withdrawn the schools all over the State would languish. This would be a sore calamity ; it is the prosperity of all of the parts which constitutes the prosperity of the State. The very advantages which the rural population now enjoy at the centres are possible, because the State dispenses its benefactions over all of its localities. Hence, by all principles of sound economy, let the property of the

State educate the children of the State, even to as far as the courses of studies are graduated.

13 In concluding this Inquiry I indulge the hope and faith that the educational energies of this State will be continued in their dignity and power; that a more enlightened wisdom will direct this power, and that a broader comprehension of the laws of tendency in schools and in the State will enlarge our conception of the terms common-school and high-school and their relations to the State, and of the possibilities which are embodied in the conception.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

BY JOHN KENNEDY, NEW YORK.

During the century of our political existence as a nation, the friends of progress have struggled arduously to establish within our borders an efficient system of education. The dream has been to make intelligence universal, so as to ensure the stability and perpetuity of our institutions. As our free schools sprung into existence and took on form and efficiency, they became the pride and boast of our people. Till recently the regret has been, not for what we have done, but for what we have not done. But while the friends of education are considering together how they may advance the good work and supply the deficiencies existing in our educational system, they are suddenly beset by the cry from certain quarters that we have done already too much, that we must stop, that we must pull down. Such a cry at such a period is certainly startling, and raises the question whether our schools are in danger. But whether or not we are in imminent danger, we are challenged by parties who are deserving of a reply. As we listen we note that the cry comes up from some of the most eminent authorities in the nation. President Eliot, of Harvard, finds ringing accord in Dr. Anderson, Bishop McQuade, Hon. Charles E. Fitch and others of New York. In what spirit shall we, who believe that our schools exist justly, answer these distinguished gentlemen? In the spirit of all courtesy and fairness. They are our respected fellow-citizens; they have a right to call us to an account; we have no right to question their motives in so doing. It would be a weakness on our part to seek to discover in them a bias or prejudice as the inspiration of the attack. They are presumably disinterested. It becomes us, therefore, to examine with care the indictment they have raised, and plead our case with all frankness before the judgment of the people. If we are innocent of the counts they enter, we shall suffer nothing by a vigorous trial; but we may suffer much if we permit judgment to be rendered against us by default. Our worthy Governor has suggested already, on two occasions, the propriety of restricting our school system. Necessity as well as courtesy would seem to compel us to plead to the indictment.

The case of the opposition was most ably presented by Hon. Charles E. Fitch in a paper read before the State Teachers' Association at Watkins. With burning eloquence and masterly argument he charged the educators of the United States with having departed into by and forbidden paths in providing facilities for instruction in certain branches which he chooses to call secondary education. The charge is based on four classes of argument, viz: 1st, historical; 2d, politico-economical; 3d, ethical; 4th, theological. In his historical argument, Mr. Fitch charges us with having departed from the formulas of the original founders of our government, and with having done things abhorrent to

their principles. He says that they founded a government essentially non-paternal; that education beyond the rudiments is paternal, and so violates their formulas. We deny; 1st, that they contemplated a non-paternal government, and 2d, that they were opposed to free instruction in advanced branches. They contemplated a wise government, which would provide for the general welfare in such a way as not to wrong or vitiate individual citizens. That they never contemplated restricting government to police duties is evinced by the acts and expressions of the original colonists, by the language of the Constitution, by the expressions of our early statesmen, and by the original acts of Congress. Whether they should have so restricted it is a question to be considered later; the question at this point is whether they did. The original colonies levied taxes for internal improvements. That was not a police expenditure. The fathers who drafted the Constitution were hence habituated to paternal customs. Did they discard them in the new government? We must look for the answer in the language of the Constitution, in the expressions of the fathers, and in the original acts of Congress. The Constitution states that Congress shall have power to levy taxes in order to "provide for the common defence and general welfare." The "defence" for which money is expended is a police function, but the "welfare" is paternal, according to the construction of the fathers. Washington used the following language in his address to the original Congress in 1790, after recommending the same measures the year before: "You will agree with me in opinion that there is nothing that can better deserve your patronage than the promotion of science and literature. Whether this desirable object will be best promoted by affording aids to seminaries of learning already established, by the institution of a national university, or by any other expedient, will be well worthy of a place in the deliberations of the Legislature." This language points to three important facts, viz: 1st, that Washington believed the government had patronage to bestow; 2d, that all the rest believed so; 3d, that science and literature were ranked by the fathers among the most deserving objects of governmental patronage. Who were these men who were of one accord in these views? The men who had risen against governmental abuse; the men who had sounded the depths of ethics in order to produce the Declaration; the men who had conquered independence; the men who had made the Constitution. Never was a generation so thoroughly schooled in the science of governmental functions; never was a body of men better prepared to detect and challenge political heresy. That Washington's orthodoxy was not challenged was evinced by the acts of that self-same Congress in bestowing patronage; bounties were granted by them to the fishing interests. They also pleaded paternal motives in creating a national bank, urging that it would give efficiency to individual enterprise and be productive of great advantage to the trade and industry of the country. What has a policeman to do with the interests of trade and industry? The fathers never dreamed they were restricted to mere police functions. That Washington was not challenged is further evinced by his language to Congress six years later, as follows: "I have proposed to Congress the expediency of establishing a National University and a Military Academy. The desirableness of both these institutions has so constantly increased with every new view I have taken on the subject, that I cannot omit the opportunity of once for all calling your attention to them. * * * Among the motives to such an institution, the assimilation of principles, opinions, and manners of our countrymen by a common education of a portion of our youth from every quarter, well deserves attention. The more homogeneous our citizens can be made in these particulars, the greater will be our prospect of permanent union; and a primary object of such a national institution should be the education of our youths in the science of government. In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important, and what duty more pressing on its Legislature than to patronize a plan for communicating it to those who are to be the future guardians of the country?" These are the very arguments that have been our shibboleths from the beginning, and upon which we are now ringing the changes from year to year. It shows that "throughout the ages one unceasing purpose runs." But observe that the fathers would begin by patronizing this secondary education now so vigorously condemned. Washington certainly did not mean to restrict the university to the curriculum of the three "R's." If we are heretics, we find that the fathers were quite as rank; we are not likely to be reclaimed by being sent to them to learn ortho-

doxy. This historical pillar of the indictment, therefore, seems a little shaky. But why was the university not established, when such unanimity of views prevailed in regard to patronage and education? Mainly for three reasons, viz: 1st, the attention of Congress was preoccupied with the settlement of questions growing out of the war; 2d, the treasury was heavily taxed with the payment of the national debt and the making of necessary internal improvements; 3d, men were feeling their way to an adjustment of the functions of state and national governments, and they apprehended that education was one of the popular interests that might safely be left to the fostering care of the states individually. The states were considered sovereignties with regard to their internal interests, with the restriction that they could not enforce such legislation as would usurp the specified powers of Congress or be detrimental to the national welfare. The worried fathers tacitly asked the states to assume the sacred trust of public education while they wrestled with foreign broglios and the great material necessities of the nation. In entrusting education to the states, what formulas did the fathers give? "The state has patronage; use that patronage in making the people intelligent, homogeneous, patriotic; build schools, build academies, build universities."

Most of the states cheerfully accepted the trust and the formulas. The states that have built schools, built seminaries, built universities, have been highly prospered. They have learned that education only borrows wealth to return it back to the state a hundred fold. They have learned that the state which starves education invites upon itself the direst ills. They have learned that the state which leaves its people to grope their way to wisdom is itself unwise. Talk of pulling down our public schools! You might as well talk of pulling down the comfort, the prosperity, the greatness which the activities of an intelligent populace have called into existence. But to return to the fathers; if Washington cajoled the people into what Mr. Fitch calls political heresy, did they recover from the heresy after his administration? They never recovered from it; they were rank heretics all down the long succession, even to President Hayes's eloquent revival of Washington's plea. The hearts of our first, last, and all intermediate administrations have warmed toward a liberal public education. The fathers divided bitterly on certain questions; but they were unanimous on the propriety of securing certain public benefits at the expense of the state and of making ample provision for public education. The fathers would be astonished at the novel arguments employed to prove that they wished to govern as policemen. They were paternalists; but they distinguished between a paternalism that vitiates a people and one that quickens and arouses their best activities. The wise Monroe placed but one restriction on the paternalism of Congress, which was that the benefits conferred by the National Government must be of a strictly national character, and not such as would favor particular states at the expense of others. There were many discussions among the fathers as to the limitations of government; but they were not the "limitations" upon which certain modern philosophers have expended much learning. They were not disputing as to whether government should be certain things, but as to which government had jurisdiction over them; it was a discussion of the relative limitations between national and state authorities. It is safe to infer that the fathers regarded a strictly police government as a chimera; and yet we are called un-republican because we do not reverse the wishes and purposes of the men who started this republic on its mission.

Those men knew their minds; they were not empirics in government science. They had a prevision of the necessities of ages, and they gave our government a character fitted to meet the vicissitudes of time. It will be noted that Washington placed great stress on governmental science as a necessity of citizenship, and urged the instruction of it in a public university. Yes, we will go to the fathers at the beginning of our new century and pray that we may not be incited to do anything that will drive their benedictions from us. It does seem that Mr. Fitch has been particularly unfortunate in his historical allusions; he could not have done the cause of public education a greater benefit than to cite us back to the views and wishes of the fathers. Had he stopped right there we might have construed his indictment into a friendly act, intended to show us where we could get aid and comfort in time of need. But he labors to prove himself in earnest. He cites the separation of church and state as an organic negation of paternalism having almost the sanctity of a positive law. A law to

whom? Certainly not to all the fathers themselves; for they entirely ignored such a construction and went on doing paternal acts with impunity. Mr. Fitch has labored hard to destroy the identity of the fathers, and to give us a fictitious ancestry. He has put a strained construction upon their acts in order to make them substantiate some newly-invented dogmas; to strengthen his own position he would make the fathers inconsistent, a quality which history will never fasten upon them for the simple reason that it was never their characteristic. The reasons that more probably actuated the fathers in the separation of church were first, a regard for the liberties of conscience; second the prevention of sectarian politics and sectarian broils. But they patronized religion indirectly, they placed a premium upon religious work by the remission of taxes on church property. Millions have been given to the church in the millions that have not been taken from it. So history repudiates the new doctrine at every point.

But behold the exuberant paternalism of the fathers speaking through President Adams in 1825: "The great object of civil government is the improvement of the condition of those who are parties to the social compact; and no government, in whatever form constituted, can accomplish the lawful ends of its institution, but in proportion as it improves the condition of those over whom it is established. Roads and canals by multiplying and facilitating the communication and intercourse between distant regions and multitudes of men, are among the most important means of improvement. But moral, political and intellectual improvement are duties assigned by the author of our existence to social no less than to individual man. For the fulfilment of those duties governments are invested with power, and to the attainment of the end the progressive improvement of the governed, the exercise of delegated power is a duty as sacred and indispensable as the usurpation of power not granted is criminal and odious. Among the first, perhaps the very first instrument for the improvement of the condition of the governed is knowledge; and to the acquisition of much of the knowledge adapted to the wants, the comforts, and the enjoyments of human life, public instruction and seminaries of learning are essential." There is an eloquent outburst of the complete philosophy of the revolutionary period; there are the ideas of the fathers expressed in words of beauty and power; there are the doctrines dear to American hearts to-day; there are the formulas which will actuate the progressive societies of earth when the dogmas which now cause some uneasiness shall have been relegated to a chapter in the history of political speculation! Did President Adams misjudge the mind of his generation? Was he answered with a cry of horror from his outraged contemporaries? By no means; men conceded the soundness and wisdom of his views, but gravely suggested the expediency of trusting to the states for those much-desired improvements. Here is the formula in plain English: "The function of government is to provide for the progressive improvement of the condition of the governed." Protection is but an item in this conception, instead of being its sum total. We stand to-day on the formulas of the fathers, and are innocent of the charge of departing from them.

But Mr. Fitch has a right to prove if he can that both the fathers and we are wrong. We will hear him. He proceeds to fix what he calls a prime fundamental limitation of republican government, viz: "Not to interfere in the concerns of the individual citizen, further than to provide for its own safety." His first point is that this is a "mandate laid upon it by the attributes of its organization." If this be true, then we have already shown that these men who organized our government did not understand its attributes. He proceeds: "As the individual surrenders no rights to the state which he can retain consistent with its well-being and the rights of his neighbors, so the state assumes to do no more towards or for the individual than its autonomy prescribes." Here is the old doctrine of a social compact, the fiction of a government constructed out of the rights chipped away from individuals. This theory of government involves a simple problem in mathematics when the requisite data is obtained; but there is serious trouble in getting the data. It is true that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts; if government is made up of abstracted rights, and we can discover what rights were abstracted, the whole question is solved; government is just a piece of man, and man is less than himself by living under government. But before we can fix the quality and quantity of this conception of government, we must first know who

yielded up the ribs. The Adam who parted with his substance in order to make us government has disappeared from history and tradition. It is easy to talk of surrender, but difficult to prove them unless the surrenderer can be produced in court. The theory of surrender, without proof, puts credulity to a terrible test. But people are getting tired of the story; it is inconsistent with reason and inconsistent with fact. It is a fact that men are gregarious animals; they congregate into communities in consequence of possessing social interests; they respond, in short, to the purposes of nature. The mass becomes a distinct existence; it has motion; it has sensibility; it has will. This will is the power of the state. This will is omnipotent; it is projected or restrained by the sensibilities. The act of this will is an act of government; the only limitation, then, to the exercise of government is the sensibility of the mass; hence statesmen, who are the organs of this will, note carefully the action of the public nerve and pulse. This is the natural history of government, the only solution that is attended with edifying results. Nature creates governments; men fix the forms of their manifestations. A constitution is an act of government; it has no sanction but the sensibility of the mass; when this sensibility is altered the constitution is doomed; it is snapped asunder like a slender thread. Is government, then, limited by the conditions of the state's safety? It is limited only by the will of the state. What becomes, then, of the "prime fundamental" and the bargains for a government? As the aggregate will (or government) is the sum of individual wills, and as the aggregate sensibility is the sum of individual sensibilities it behooves a state to be concerned about the condition of its units. The fathers were neither undecided in their convictions on this point nor ambiguous in their expressions; they formulated into terms unmistakable the law of governmental interference and non-interference with the concerns of the individual. The formula is this: "Government may and *should* interfere with the concerns of the individual so far as the promotion of the public good necessitates; government shall abstain from interference with the concerns of the individual so far as danger to the public good seems a possible result." Their formula of governmental relations and duty is: "The progressive improvement of the condition of the governed." This is the formula which has shaped hitherto all the eloquence of our Legislatures; this is the formula which has directed the crystallization of discussion into acts of government; this is the formula which is deep-rooted in American consciousness, and is the main-spring to American progress. Shall we take a new departure? Shall we stop the wheels of progress? Shall we deprive America of its inspiration in order to try an experiment suggested by the distinguished gentlemen who have called us to the bar? That the experiment is futile is proclaimed both by nature and out of the mouths of their own schools; it is also proclaimed by their own indefiniteness. Nature says that you can not limit a government, except by the condition of the governed; the real government, the power behind the throne, and superior to all organs is public opinion. Let those who detect mistakes and excesses in government, hasten to correct them in the true and only way, the purification of public opinion; let them reach the minds and consciences of units through the necessary instrumentalities of schools. Selfishness is guided in its projects by the condition of the national pulse. It stands abashed and terrified before an awakened and honest people. This is American doctrine; it has been thought suitable to the circumstances of our situation and the intended career of our republic. The doctrine of a strictly police government was first enunciated beyond the Atlantic. Those who would transplant it here are crushed by their own instructors. The founders of a pure police philosophy denounce the modifications which their American disciples would engraft upon the doctrine. These American philosophers give us the dictum of "the safety of the state," and intimate that government may properly give such instruction as will supply the conditions of safety. Mr. Herbert Spencer speaks across the water and says these gentlemen are heretics, that they utter a fallacy. He says they would involve the doctrine in inextricable confusion; he says they would confound the doctrine and demoralize it by committing it to the finding of a thing that is utterly unfindable, viz: the quantity and quality of instruction fitted to meet the conditions of state safety. He defies them to find a peculiar conserving power in arithmetic that does not inhere as fully in algebra or astronomy; he challenges them to show a strengthening force in writing that does not equally inhere in drawing and painting. He

says that if government is committed to one subject of instruction it is committed to all; but he holds that it has properly nothing to do with any. He gives American practice the credit of being consistent with American doctrine; but he is particularly severe upon the monstrosities of the American branch of the school of police philosophies.

But we will let Mr. Fitch exhibit his own indefiniteness. He says: "We may not be able to specify just what amount of education for the citizen is necessary, in order for him to conform, or be conformed to the requirement demanded. We may indicate with greater precision, what is not, than what is demanded. Here is a stalwart oak. We lop its topmost branches. Still it is vigorous in its abundant life. We cut branch after branch, until we reach the trunk and find that, at last, there is a place where the axe is death to the oak. Just where that place is, the empiric or the arboriculturist must tell. So as I am not a professional educator, I shall not assume to say at what point the state shall apply the axe to the system of education it now encourages." This is remarkable language. It is a strange admission on the part of the challenging party to intimate that he merely suspects we are wrong in teaching certain things, but is not able to prove it. His figure is likewise unfortunate for him. He is considering the educational conditions of the safety of the state. To find at what point the state may just live, he refers to the process of almost killing a stalwart oak. The noble oak in the figure is certainly symbolical of the educated state. He is apparently offended at the umbrageous shade, the massive beauty, the commanding majesty which good condition have given the grand old tree. He condemns the noble boughs, with their kindred branches, twigs and leaves, as foreign "fungi" improperly fastened there. He holds that the object was created for use and not for ornament. He would reduce it to its normal condition, that of a stump to serve the simple purpose of resistance. We would do no injustice to Mr. Fitch's position in making this application of his figure. Every ghastly wound he inflicted upon the comely tree suggested the lamentable languishing of a deliberately slaughtered state. He awakens, though unintentionally, a sensation of sickening horror when he leads us to that point where the lifethrob of a great state becomes a matter of nice observation.

We believe we have shown conclusively that our accusers are repudiated both by the fathers of this nation and by the fathers of their own philosophy; we hope we have also shown that they are repudiated by nature and reason. We see but little comfort to their cause or danger to ours in the first two classes of arguments. We pass to consider their arguments ethical. They hold that paternalism in government removes from the people the spur of necessity and tends to make them indolent and dependent. We agree that all excessive paternalism is productive of such fruits. But in our system there is a check on excessive paternalism in the law of "the progressive improvement of the condition of the governed." All honor and fame to the great President who put this mighty principle into language! From the grave he throws around the friends of progress the impenetrable armor of the Revolution. Societies may experiment; philosophers may speculate; but the nations that attain real prosperity will find it through the undying formula of John Quincy Adams. But our friends hold that government patronage is the cause of corruption. We deny the proposition. The cause of corruption is a vitiated popular conscience. It is true that governmental patronage is an objective point of corruption. But how does it reach this patronage? By first organizing the corrupt elements already existing in the body politic. If those elements are strong enough to win, corruption does reach the public purse and plunder it. The great battle of education is to put the corrupt elements in the minority and make honesty, intelligence and patriotism the ruling forces of the nation. We are glad to find men becoming so thoroughly conscious of the power of organized corruption. It bespeaks a cordial support of education; for wise men must find the remedy for political evils in the intellectual and moral enlightening of the masses. We want the sanction of virtue. If individuals see dishonesty triumphant at the Capitol they are deprived of a national incentive to a moral life. It is proper that the doings of our governors should be taken as an index of the condition of the governed. Where is the representative that will defy a constituency? Even in his corruption he will not knowingly venture beyond the sensibilities of the people who place

him in power. The law of political stealing is to steal with safety, that is, to keep within the bargain by which dishonesty is elevated to power.

But while Mr. Fitch declines to give us his curriculum he nevertheless offers us an ethical crucible by which he says we can find it for ourselves. The crucible would come in better character had its powers been first tested by the inventor. The author seems to have faith in his invention, though he chooses to retire into the background while we test its alchemic or necromantic properties. We do not wish to be satirical; but there is something a little amusing in the idea of withholding arguments and offering in their place a machine for the manufacture of them. It is held by physicists that no more power can be obtained from a machine than is put into it; a machine applies but does not originate force. If the machine contains any force, and if Mr. Fitch primed it, then he could have given us first hand all that he gives us indirectly through the machine. We will examine the crucible and find if we can its secret power. It is called "compulsory education." He holds that the state can compel the use of facilities as well as supply them. True. He holds that the state should compel the use of the facilities it has supplied. True. He asks, would we compel every child to use all the facilities now provided by the state? We answer no. Why? Because the real government, public opinion, would not sanction it. Why then provide those facilities? Because fortunately many of our young people voluntarily and eagerly avail themselves of them. But do they not do so through selfish motives? No matter what the motive, their improvement is nevertheless a public good. But are they not the children of the rich who attend our advanced departments? Not necessarily; we give opportunity to the poor, and awaken emulation in them; the poor are represented in all our departments. But we welcome to our schools the children of the rich man. Why? Because, in the first place, it is a compliment to the efficiency of our schools; the rich man sends his child where he can get the most development, not where he can save the most money. We welcome the rich man's child because, in the public school, he learns to respect manly poverty, and loses the haughty feeling of caste; the public schools assimilate to a common standard all who enter them, and tend to bring about that homogeneity of citizenship for which Washington and the fathers yearned. But would we compel attendance at all? We would. How far? As far as public opinion would sanction it; but as public opinion is a variable quantity, so would our standard of compulsory education vary. So the crucible gives us no solution. The matter of curriculum is very properly left to the circumstances and educational enterprise of particular communities. By our system a community is not obliged to teach algebra; but it is applauded for doing so, if it feels able and willing.

We now follow Mr. Fitch to a business argument. He cites us to private schools and says that secondary education as a national demand will call into existence a supply of facilities on business principles. He says it is wrong for the Government to control the channels of legitimate enterprise. We are *laissez faire*s enough to be fully in accord with the last mentioned principle. Nor have we any war with the private schools; that they can subsist at all in competition with the public schools is a compliment to their efficiency; they must have great merit in order to draw pupils in at the expense of tuition. They are engaged in legitimate enterprise, and have a just right to all the patronage they can command, even though it should result in depopulating the public schools; the state wants enlightened citizens, and is indifferent as to where they got their culture. But that government should depend upon private enterprise for the development of its vital educational interests is another question. Private enterprise has had this field for thirty or more centuries, public education scarcely one. Compare the achievements of each. The nations that trusted to private educational enterprises were overwhelmed with political evils of every form, and sank into hopeless decay; the nations that have built upon public education are now the first powers of the world, and have a future before them. The law in this matter which the experience of centuries has evolved, is to allow private educational enterprise, but not to trust to it. But it is held that secondary education is an exclusively personal matter, and therefore has no just claims upon the state. So far from being an exclusively personal matter, the state is benefited more by one person who masters advanced studies, than by a dozen who stop with the rudiments. Every candid person must acknowledge the truthfulness of this proposition:

and our statesmen will remember it in providing for the common weal. What then is the proper limit of the curriculum of studies? The circumstances and public opinion of particular communities. One community should not be restrained from teaching algebra because another community does not feel prepared to do so. How much shall be taught is a question of expediency to be settled by each particular community from the stand point of its own circumstances and zeal.

There remains to be considered the theological argument, and on this Mr. Fitch places great stress. He holds that all men are sectarians; those who have no creed at all as well as those who belong to particular church organizations; hence our teachers are all sectarians of some sort or other, imbued with predilections, more or less intense, and ready to take advantage of occasions to make proselytes to their own particular views on the religious question. He holds that these occasions are not only presented in discussing the more advanced subjects of our curriculum, but that they are unavoidable; we cannot reach conclusions in regard to this phenomena and forces of nature without involving the consideration of theological tenets. The teacher, in consequence of having the most power and tactics, is enabled in these crises to bias the children away from the faith of their fathers.

There is a very serious charge indeed, and worthy of the most careful examination. Parents not only do feel concerned about the religious views of their children, but they should. They should want to prepare their children not only for the concerns of time, but for the concerns of an unending eternity, into which all must pass without knowing the day or the hour. Blessed is the parent who has a realizing sense of that awful eternity ever near, yet far from childish consciousness. Parents are not always permitted to lead their children into eternity; they are often compelled to send the little ones on before. Where so many different classes of worshipers each profess to entertain the views most pleasing in the sight of the Omnipotent Father, who is competent to decide between them? The state acknowledges its clog of mortality; it is but an aggregate of human weaknesses; it assumes no function beyond the concerns of time; it halts with reverence before the faith of the household seeking according to its best light communion with the Infinite. The state is candid; it does not assume to have instructions from a Higher Power in matters of worship; but it does recognize man as a worshipping creature, and says he shall not be disturbed in his right. The state, however, has viewed religious activity in an economic point of view; it has recognized in it an educational force and has therefore encouraged it indirectly. Nothing but the law of the progressive improvement of the condition of the governed prevents the state from giving direct assistance to religious movements. The state feels responsible for the diffusion of morality; it would assist religious teachers, did it not invite thereby the reaction of religious politics. The formal separation of church and state is therefore but an act of policy resulting from a weighing of advantages and disadvantages; the law of the progressive improvement of the condition of the governed has sat in judgment upon it, and a verdict has been rendered. A similar case is now on trial. The state, through reasons of public expediency, has patronized medicine. Sects are springing up in this department of usefulness. Their acerbities are leading to political organizations annoying to the state. If there should come a time when the evils from this cause shall carry down the balance against the public good, there will occur a separation of medicine and the state.

We believe we have stated truthfully the attitude of the state toward religion. Now is it true that, after all its precaution, the state is in practice tampering with the religious convictions of its citizens by carrying on what is called secondary education? Before proceeding to answer, we will first take the liberty of seeing what the charge involves. The charge involves a frightful recoil to those who make it, shivering every vestige of consistency. They hold that the state should teach certain branches in order to supply the conditions of its safety. Now knowledge is a unit: its characteristics, as knowledge, are universal; it consists of things, relations, laws, and forces. If an investigation into one class of phenomena, with its attendant relations, laws, and forces, involves theological tenets, then will an investigation into any other class likewise involve theological tenets. If our teachers are compelled to construe theological tenets in order to proceed with the work of instruction, where will their interpretations have the most effect? Why, certainly among the

younger children, who are not yet supplied with reasons for the faith that is in them; the older ones are less likely to be caught with special pleading, and are safer from the influences of proselyting teachers. It strikes us that the state-safety theory in this instance commits *felo de se*. But we will try to save it from itself by showing that the charge is utterly unfounded. We shall appeal both to reason and experience. Science assumes nothing but the existence of human faculties and external phenomena. Its method is the method of reason; it leaves entirely untouched the domain of faith; it is not aware that any religious sect ever existed; its field is the universe of matter, relation, force, and law; its solvent is the intellectual consciousness. It begins with immediate facts and relations; it endeavors to trace their antecedents; and while doing so becomes measurably familiar with their law, so as to be measurably prepared to predict their consequences. This power of prediction is prized by the state, because it enables its citizens to avoid destructive and wasteful activities, and engage in those that will contribute to the public good. But the law of expediency lies so near the law of absolute duty that the latter is liable to be revealed, even if it is not directly sought; the thoroughly discreet man is a good man; for, wherein he falls short of goodness he will be found lacking in discretion. But science seeks after the law of virtue; it recognizes a moral nature, and endeavors to find out by its own method the law of the correct exercise of the moral emotions. Science knows nothing, and professes to know nothing, except what lies within a limited circle. It has traced but a few antecedents, beyond which lie unending series back to the great first cause. Science is modest in the presence of the unexplored infinity that lies beyond its domain; it only assumes to answer questions within its sphere. Speculation may try to jump the series and reach the first cause; but science is willing to wait. While the domain of science is comparatively small, compared with the realms of the unknown, yet to the novice it is actually very large; there is work for years, if not for a life time, within the domain of undisputed realities. It is among these undisputed realities that the teacher labors; he invites the child to perceive and know. There is no occasion for opinion or speculation; real facts are pressing to be perceived and understood. It involves no theological controversy to take a child to a water mill and explain the nature of the force, the uses of the parts in the machinery, and the products of applied power. The same thoughtful neighbor may, without any theology, cause the child to reflect upon the antecedent processes, the production, harvesting, and transportation of the grain. He may go further without danger to the child's faith; he may show the relation of moisture and sunlight to vegetable growth; he may trace the moisture to the clouds and back to the ocean; he may introduce the whole subject of heat while considering its action in producing vapor; he must reveal the properties of the atmosphere and the causes that put it in motion; this brings in the zones of climate and a conception of the equator, the poles, and the form of the earth. Is the child injured yet? No, we have not struck the theological basis yet. But the guide may think it no intrusion on domestic theology to explain that the sun which warms the wheat-field does not go round the earth as it appears, but that the alternation of day and night is due to the earth's rotation. Could he escape explaining the seasons? How will he begin without geometry? How will he proceed without gravitation and the universal laws of motion? When he has traversed the ecliptic and shown the earth to be a planet, will he fail to remark that it has neighbors, making up the solar system? Will he forget the earth's satellite, and with it the whole subject of secondary and involved systems? Can he avoid the suggestion that the sun, with its family, is swinging around some other centre? Will he omit, in this connection, the tremendous suggestions of the firmament, bristling with suns, and speaking of systems without end? He recalls the boy to earth, tells him, perhaps, of the form of that mighty ocean whence the moisture came; he may show its waters returning to it again after blessing the peoples of the earth; he may discuss those peoples; he may unfold the progress of civilization; he may reveal the whole field of commerce and the division of labor; he may return to the field; he may suggest, perhaps, the parchment deed of ownership. The little parchment can give him clues running back to the pre-historic Nile; also other clues ramifying the whole question of civil government and evolving the conception of the state. The man lifting the bag exhibits muscular action, and the whole subject of physiology is suggested; the man breathes,

and opens the doors of chemistry. But we refrain from following the interesting couple further; they will lead us to the outward bounds of science without striking the theological bias. Now, we ask in all sincerity, what theological difference there must necessarily be between teaching by a mill-wheel and teaching in a comfortable school-house? There is none; the charge of a necessary theological bias is without foundation in fact. But we adduce a new witness; we cite the churches themselves. Many of the churches have established schools. They open the doors of these schools to children of all persuasions. They advertise that while they give religious instruction to those who desire it, others can have secular instruction without detriment to their convictions. The church schools have not only promised this, but they have fulfilled their promise; they are trusted; they are patronized by those who are at variance with their theology. There is, however, one branch which gives occasion for the theological bias. The history of mediæval and modern Europe is to a large extent the history of churches. It is impossible to understand the events of that period without considering the action of churches. It is held that historians have written of this period in a partisan spirit, putting a false coloring on events, if not actually subverting the truth. Now, whether this is so or not so, the fact that many of our citizens believe it is so raises an important case, and one worthy of our most important consideration.

It is the policy of our government not to give offence wittingly to any class of its citizens. Parents are permitted to inspect the text books used in our schools, and to restrain their children from pursuing any studies that may not appear to be for their benefit. Here is one protection against the theological bias; children who do not study in school the history of modern Europe are not likely to catch the teacher's bias. Another protection is that the public school teachers do not wish to show a bias. Unless the children know where the teacher attends church they are not likely to get much clue to his religious predilections. The public school teachers meet in frequent conventions for the discussion of educational questions, but they take no inventory on those occasions as to what church each belongs to. They meet on common ground as teachers, having a common purpose—the education of all the children of our country, regardless of distinctions. It has been thought that the privilege of rejecting a questionable branch was ample protection to parental rights. It is conceded to be so in strictly sectarian schools. Then why should it not be so in the public schools, which are professedly secular, and which are under every constraint to steer clear of theological controversies?

We have examined all the counts in the indictment; we have endeavored to give each a judicial examination. We could do no less; this is no time for special pleading; a nation, a world, posterity are interested in this great trial. If we should flippantly wave a serious charge aside, or answer it with adroit fallacies, we would but store up confusion for our cause, and incur the alienation of those who are disposed to be our friends. We must be fair and frank in our arguments, as well as sincere and earnest in our efforts to promote the public good. If we have not reckoned on invasion hitherto, we certainly have now the most powerful suggestions to look to our defences. We are beset by skilful fighters, worthy of our steel. But we feel strong in the right, and have faith that the right must triumph. There are no fungi on the American public school system; it is a symmetrical unit, as conceived by the fathers and developed by their sons. Whoever strikes at a single part of it strikes at the whole structure. Let it be once conceded in the country that any lopping is needed, then is public education doomed. We hold, as we believe, that all its departments now existing should be preserved, both for reasons of sound public policy and for reasons of vital necessity to the system. We hold further that it can not safely be restricted at all; it should possess the element of growth in order to conform to the growing conditions of the country.

Our opponents hold that the state may justly open the eyes of the children to a certain extent; but beyond a certain extent the eye-opening becomes an injustice to individual tax-payers, and a detriment to the public good. Why open their eyes at all? To give them vision. Why would the state give vision? They answer, in order to insure its own safety against the damaging tendencies of blind people. Suppose we grant it; will not this safety be better insured by imparting distinct vision, than by giving merely a hazy perception of confused objects? The state safety doctrine necessarily commits its advocates to an education limited only by expediency. The only con-

sistent position in regard to public education is either unlimited education or none. All other prime fundamentals strangle themselves. By unlimited education we mean unlimited in theory; education will be limited in practice by the circumstances of each particular community, and this limitation is a mere question of expediency to be settled by those who are conversant with the particular circumstances. It may be expedient at times to restrict the curriculum; but no fundamental principle is violated by its extension.

Here, then, is ground on which our critics may properly join issue with us. They are in possession of the facts, as well as we, and may properly undertake to demonstrate the inexpediency of providing at public expense such educational facilities as we have already called into existence. They undertake to do this while professing to discuss other principles. They cite us to private schools, and assert the inexpediency of burdening the state with the erection of institutions which would spring up spontaneously if the government would stop disturbing natural laws. Demand, they say, ever calls into existence a supply. They say that people appreciate better what they provide for themselves than what is given to them. They say, furthermore, that gifts vitiate the quality of a people by destroying the energy and independence that result from experience in supplying their own necessities. This all seems plausible; but it goes for naught, in consequence of resting on a great fundamental fallacy. Before discussing the fallacy, we will take occasion to show that our opponents are again wounding themselves with their own weapons. If instruction in algebra will supply itself, why should not instruction in arithmetic also supply itself? If it pampers a people to give them algebra, why will it not also pamper a people to give them arithmetic? Our critics are driven to the remarkable admission that the state must vitiate its people a little to save its own life. They announce the paradox that improvement involves injury—that it consists in an averaging of qualities, whereby some are raised while others are lowered—that after a people are spoiled enough to save the life of a state, they may then exert themselves to recover from the injury the state has inflicted upon them. It seems to us these conclusions are necessarily involved in the premises taken; but these are conclusions that no healthy mind will accept; they are repugnant to reason.

The fallacy underlying the doctrine of a spontaneous supply of educational facilities is the assumption of a demand. The plausibility vanishes before the great fact that the demand does not exist. It should exist, and would exist were men in their normal condition. They should hunger after intellectual and moral good as they now hunger after physical good. But men have lost the appetites which should be the spur to intellectual endeavor. In its connection with education, the state does not give to a craving public; it aims on the contrary to arouse aspirations in a dormant public by making that public feel the good of knowledge. The absence of demand is the social disease which the state would remedy. It tempts the dormant appetites by the proximity of their fitting food, aiming thereby to arouse and restore them to their normal action. It expects the youth to feel a personal benefit resulting from instruction. This personal benefit is but the happy fruition attending the proper exercise of any of the normal faculties. The state is everywhere exercising itself to create a demand for wisdom. It offers dainty succulents in the primary grades; it offers solid meats to the more advanced classes; it would care for the progressive cultivation of the valuable appetite it arouses. By feeding the advanced classes it sends down to the lower grades the spur of emulation to re-enforce feeble appetite. The advanced classes are in the service of the state while in school as well as after they separate to their respective life missions. In the name of the valuable men and women that the advanced classes of our public schools have given to society, in the name of the republican sentiment that those classes have fostered, in the name of the younger children to whom those classes have ever supplied incentives, in the name of the free school system which they have tended to consolidate and confirm, in the name of the public good, we ask that these classes be spared from the frantic axes that are now upraised to their destruction. Economy, retrenchment, is a virtue; but, like many other good names, it may, in the hands of skilful men, be made productive of a destructive mania. A public may be maddened by an idea as well as inspired by it; it will kill its Socrates in a fit of passion, and afterwards bewail through unending ages its slaughtered benefactor. The crime of Socrates was that he had not a thought for self, but spent his life in

transforming the frivolous youth of Athens into broad-browed Platos. He was condemned, ostensibly for making presumptuous innovations on time-honored customs, but really because his usefulness had made him obnoxious to individuals, in consequence of providing an awkward obstacle in the way of their designs. The American public can well afford to pause before they reenact the tragedy of Athens. Such crimes placed Athens under the invader's heel, and gave Byron a subject for an immortal lament. Had Athens known and cherished her Socrates she might have shed effulgence over a darkened world, and saved the national heroes of twenty centuries.

A new Athens rises up from the ashes of twenty centuries of retribution. Again has a Solon given the law and gone to his reward, once more have wise laws yielded their fruits of private and public prosperity, and a vigorous national life; once more are men humanized and content to find their enjoyments in the liberal acts of peace; once more has the human intellect begun its sublime conversations with the mighty voice of nature; once more is human sensibility thrilled with the beauty of perfect order; once more is human genius proving its divine origin by imitating the eternal justice of its God; once more has eternal justice emerged from the night of ages to visit in his own proper person the fireside of benevolence; once more are the people equal before the law; once more is the popular will supreme; once more is an humble, unselfish Socrates detected going round doing good; and once more is he dragged unceremoniously to a public trial. Once more is he beset with fierce accusers, armed with ready argument and wild invective; once more is he hounded down with the "mad dog" cry; once more is he menaced with death; once more do his hunters feel sure that they have bagged their game. Nor is the parallel yet complete; he is again condemned to a lingering death. Nor have the modern persecutors of education improved upon the clemency of their ancient prototypes; the older Socrates was permitted to see his lower extremities first expire, the later victim must feel the cold chills of death settling down from above.

It remains to be seen whether the same amount of frenzy can be excited in the omnipotent populace against the hounded victim. If so, the parallel is complete; history repeats itself in another great cycle; men will have proved their inability to bear prosperity and their incapacity to learn from experience: joyous optimism receives its death blow, and sombre pessimism settles down to a feast of human souls.

But we will not close with this dark picture. We will hope that justice may prevail over passion in this great trial. We will trust to American instinct not to lay violent hands upon the public schools until their case has been fully heard and judicially weighed. The spirit of the revolution has not departed entirely from the land. That was the spirit of thought and fairness; it could burn with sublime indignation at real wrongs; but it never struck without a cause. It can not be possible that the Americans of the second century will undo the achievements of the first. It would be a revolution indeed to begin uprooting the institutions of the land; it would show that a marvelous change has come over the popular heart. In free countries institutions are the outward expression of the inner life of a people; those institutions embody both the national idea and the national affection. Touch an institution and you thrill a nation throughout every fibre of its being. The hope for our modern Socrates lies in the fact that he has become an institution. If we have become transformed and are not the same people, then our institutions are in danger. But if we are the same people that asked the world to look into their hearts when they struck for independence; if we are the same people that subdued the forest and the prairies, and erected in the wilderness the fabric of a mighty nation; if we are the same people that dreamed of rebuilding history by having events flow from the pure fountains of history and justice, we shall not now turn and rend the very institution on which we have builded as our cardinal principle, as our foundation stone. If we are the American people of history, we shall be true to our traditions and our ideals. We shall push onward to our mission. We have conquered oppression; our mission still impels us to conquer ignorance and vice, and if need be to conquer ourselves to a higher manhood, a loftier patriotism. If we lose our schools we lose our identity; we lose our bond of cohesion; we lose the main-spring to our mission; we shall have a new and uncertain America constructed

out of the ruins of the honored old; we shall have, as in Europe, the carnival of passion and the desolation of warring factions.

We need go back no farther than current history to see the uses of our public schools. They saved the nation once from dissolution; they have since saved it from the horrors of domestic and foreign wars. There should prevail but one rule in regard to public education, and that is to build as we can, but never pull down.

EX-GOVERNOR SEYMOUR ON HIGHER EDUCATION.

On the last day of the meeting, Gov. Seymour was called on for a few remarks, and gave his views on the subject of the so-called secondary or higher education. By urgent request he was afterward prevailed upon to prepare an abstract of them, and we have the pleasure of presenting a report from his own manuscript.

I do not like to speak to men who know much more than I do about education. But there are some facts about its history which I wish to state.

In some way we have lost sight of the laws made in the early days of New York, and of the views held by the great men who first gave shape to its policy. They made a law which they meant should reach all classes, and to give a chance for all to gain knowledge in its largest forms and best estate. There are no grander words to be found in our statute books, when we see their full scope, than these: "*An university is instituted in this State, of which the government is and shall continue to be vested in a board of regents.*" In other sections of this law this board of regents was clothed with all the powers known to universities in Europe.

By these brief words the whole territory of our State was made a seat of learning, in its broadest, highest sense. But few laws in the world's history have been conceived in a larger spirit. It did not plant education in certain favored spots to which the few could resort who were able to seek knowledge at points remote from home; it meant that in all its forms it should be taught in all parts of its broad territory. It implied that not only common schools but that academies and colleges were among the rights of the people where they desired their methods of mental training. To this end they made a system by which all forms of instruction could easily be established in every town and county. All these academies and colleges were parts of one grand university acting in concert, under a common control, and yet admitting of every diversity demanded by the sentiments and conditions of the community in which they existed. It gave to every creed a right to build its schools; yet it was not sectarian, for all were brought together and made parts of one grand structure, under a common, harmonious control. This plan gave life to our common school system. It made for it wise and active friends in every part of the State.

The growth of our State has been, so swift and great, and this has been due so much to incomers from other states or from Europe, that we have lost sight of this first great system. Schools of all kinds, and in all forms, have grown up until there is a clash in our ideas about their claims to be kept up at the public cost. Many wise and able men hold that the State should do no more than to help those schools which teach only the first elements of education. If we had carried out the plan of our fathers; if we had no universities, so called, but all had kept their right names of colleges; if they had all been made parts of the University of the State of New York; if our academies and

high schools had been kept in place; if our common schools had always borne their true relationship to this system, there would be now no controversy about the claims of all to public favor and support. It is said that we have no right to levy taxes to give any kind of education which all cannot enjoy; that the great body of those who go to our schools can only gain what is called primary education; that if we go beyond this we merely help some at the cost of all to gain some advantages which will be personal and peculiar to them. If this is true, there is great force in the argument against all schools except our common schools; and these must be kept down to the most simple branches or they will be open to the same censure.

If it is true that when you give a man knowledge you give him that which becomes his own, to the exclusion of others, as when you give him land or other property, then you wrong the taxpayer when you force him to pay in whole, or in part, for such education. But is this a true view of the thing? Knowledge can no more be held as a special property than electricity can be. It can no more be confined within the minds of men than the radiating heat of furnaces, or the beacon upon light-houses can be shut up so that they shall not be felt nor seen. What is the true view of education? What are its influences, and how can these best be diffused so that they shall be felt by all classes, give light to all eyes, and life and vigor to all interests? If all this can be done, no one can then say that it is partial in its work—that it helps a class, and that it has not claims upon every person, and upon every form of property.

The true way to lift up a people to a high level of virtue and intelligence is not to give them all the same teaching in schools. It is right to give them, so far as the State can, the same chance for learning. The varied conditions, capacities, and necessities of the young will direct not only the amount of learning which each may gain, but the direction their studies may take. None can follow up nor master all branches of learning. We find in the end, not only in the school-house, but through the course of life, each person shows a taste or capacity for some particular form of knowledge. And it is well that it is so; for by this means all subjects are studied out by some, and the whole community are made more wise than they would be if the effort was made to keep them all abreast in their march of intelligence. We see in the affairs of life that the commerce in ideas between the minds of all men is constantly going on in the most active, subtle ways. We see in every society, where there are men of business, of mechanical skill, of scientific knowledge, or of general learning, that the whole community will be permeated with diffused knowledge of business principles, of scientific facts, of mechanical processes, of general intelligence, and that to a much higher degree than we may have supposed at first thought. The peculiar intelligence of each rapidly becomes the common property of all. Every man in every useful pursuit is a much more active and valuable teacher than he may suppose himself to be.

Men may not impart to others in the conduct of their pursuits their particular skill in performance, but they do show the principles upon which they act and the intelligence which guides them. To learn how much we know about all the trades which are carried on around us, go to the shops of our mechanics with some one who has never before seen the work which is carried on within them. You will then feel how much more you know than your companion, and how much intelligence you have gained unconsciously. You will probably be surprised to find how much you owe to every class of mechanics in your neighborhood; how much they have taught you when you were an unconscious learner. Let the mechanic who had no early education, but who has lived in such a community, as I have, be supposed to go with one with whom he started in life, but who has since lived where there was no learning, and let them visit the libraries of the learned and the laboratories of the scientific, and he will find by comparing himself with his former equal in education, that he has gained, unconsciously perhaps, an amount of knowledge in science and every branch of learning which gives him every advantage of character and position over his former companion. He will see and feel that the learning of his neighbors and the teachings which they once got at schools which he was not able to attend, were gained for his benefit and for his elevation as well as for theirs.

Nay, more than this is frequently true. Men of science as a rule are not able to reap the benefits of their own discoveries. They must content themselves

with the happiness they feel in those studies which absorb their minds. The practical use, the golden gains of their knowledge, as a rule, pass over to the workshops, factories and countinghouses of our country. You cannot visit any scene of labor, or any prosperous business pursuit where you will not find proofs upon every side that the full measure, and the latest discovery of knowledge and science are working to help every form of industry and every measure to advance the welfare of society. There is no kind of property which is not in some degree made more valuable by every educated mind in its vicinity. Whoever will trace out this subject in all its bearings and will add up its results, will find that its sum will be equal to the difference between a civilized and a savage community.

There is no just view of education which does not take into account its diffusive nature. But it may be said, if all this is true it is still best to leave higher education to private support. It will always get great aid from that source.

But if it depends upon that alone, only a class can enjoy it. It would leave a wide gap between the schools for all, and the schools for a few. It would shut out many of the best and brightest minds, and their loss would be a public loss. It would break up the unity of our system, its broad scope and the sympathies which should run through and permeate the whole.

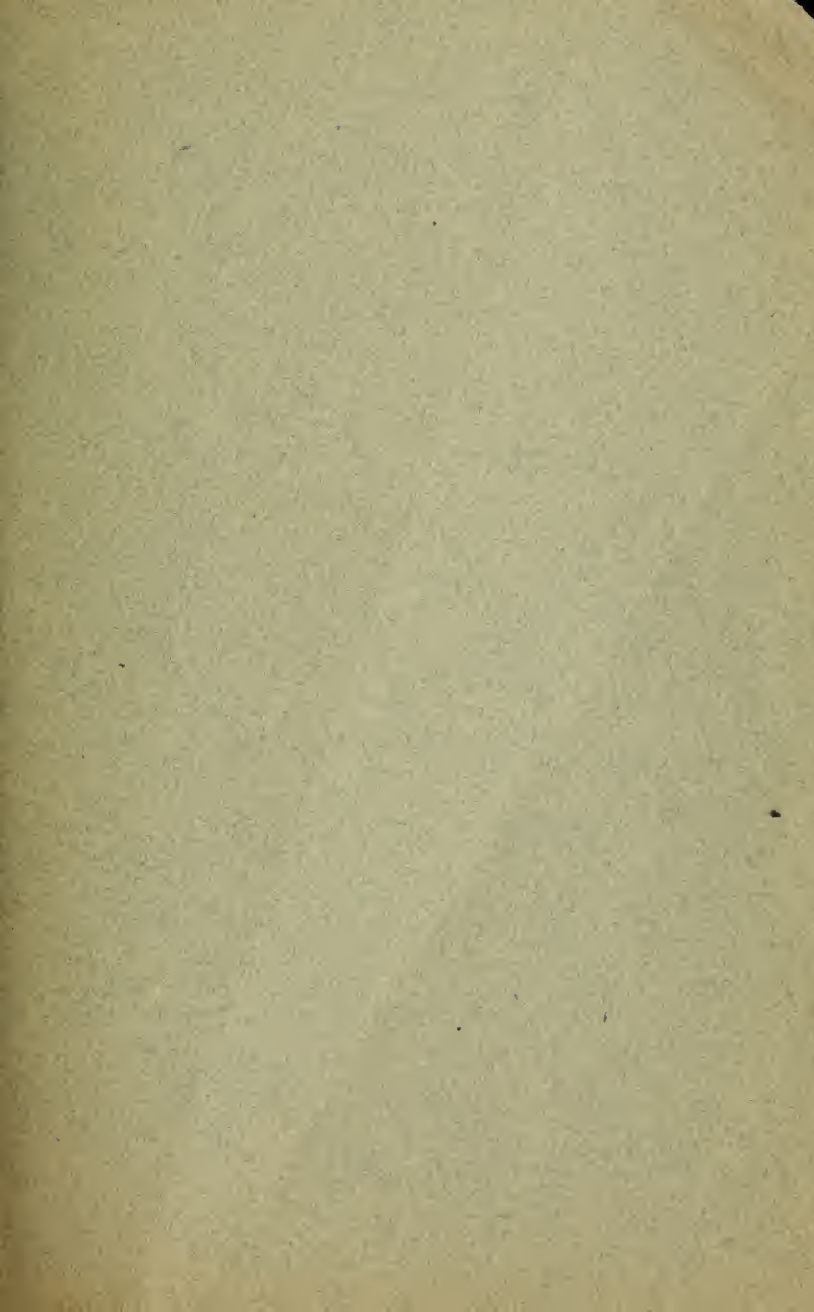
We find that in European countries the wide distance between those who are educated and the mass of the people prevents that ready diffusion of knowledge which we see in our own land. Their universities are things set apart for the use of a class. They in no way seek nor enjoy the sympathy of all their people.

The education they give is shaped to meet the interests of a class and is not of a kind which enlightens the whole public. The social structure of our society, the freedom of intercourse, our public discussions on all questions of interest, our system of popular lectures, and the works of our press all give us the means for scattering knowledge broadcast, and give a public value to every man's learning here, which it does not give him elsewhere.

All grades of schools are needed by our political organization. Our very government in all its features is a system of widespread education. Men start from humble positions and are taught by their political duties.

In the first place, in minor offices they become wise legislators as they rise from one position to another. They are taught not only by the duties of their stations but by a large intercourse with others until I say from my experience with public men and affairs that they make our most safe and wise legislators. Nothing can be more mistaken than the idea that the public have no interest in anything more than what is called primary education and that all beyond that is a matter of individual concern.

If it is true that the intelligence, the virtue, and the prosperity of society demand that some be highly educated; if the interests of persons and property are promoted by this, then the public welfare calls for schools where they can be taught. If this education by its very nature makes the student through life, whatever his business may be, a living light-house, shining for the good of all, it is not unjust that such education should be in some degree at the public cost. If the man of science is through life by his intercourse with others an unpaid teacher of facts, which give prosperity to our workshops, and new value to every field of industry, it is fair that he should be helped by the public to gain that knowledge by the public which is thus used for the public good. If common schools are demanded by the very nature of our government, then the interests of all our people demand that there should be those so highly educated, not only that they can carry them on, but, more than that, who can by their influence keep alive in the public mind a sense of the value of such schools. Where there are no men well trained in learning there will be no schools fit to teach its first elements.



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